THE TEN THEOPHANIES

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THE

TEN THEOPHANIES;

OR,

THE APPEARANCES OF OUR LORD TO MEN BEFORE HIS BIRTH IN BETHLEHEM.

BY

REV. WILLIAM M. BAKER, D.D.,

Author of "The New Timothy," "His Majesty Myself," etc.

"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am."—JOHN viii. 56-58.

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TO

MY SEVEREST CRITIC AND DEAREST FRIEND,

MY WIFE.

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INTRODUCTION.

The following hymn of devout and tender enthusiasm for the Lord Jesus, translated from the Latin, may be found in numerous collections of sacred verse:

"Fairest Lord Jesus,
Ruler of Nature!
Jesus, of God and of Mary the Son!
Thee will I cherish,
Thee will I honor—
Thee, my delight and my glory and crown!

"Fair are the meadows,
Fairer the woodlands,
Robed in the flowery vesture of spring:
Jesus is fairer,
Jesus is purer,
Making my sorrowful spirit to sing.

"Fair is the moonshine,
Fairer the sunlight
Than all the stars of the heavenly host:
Jesus shines brighter,
Jesus shines purer
Than all the angels that heaven can boast!"

This is known as the Crusaders' Hymn, written in the twelfth century, and sung by the armies that sought to recover the Holy Land from the Saracens. There is also a legend that it was composed by a crusader, and was found, both words and music, in his helmet as he lay dead upon the field.

I love to believe the legend true; and as I hear it softly

sung, I am carried away in imagination to the Orient, where the enthusiasts of that strange historic movement are forcing their patient way over seas and deserts toward the dishonored sepulchre of their Lord. This gallant knight has closed his castle, bidden adieu to the lady of his love, sewed the cross on his breast, and gone forth with only his trusty sword and spear and coat of mail. Under the smiting suns and through the long sieges, his flesh and his heart fail. But One Figure never fades from his dimming sight. It is always going on before him, and is the strength of his heart and the inspiration of his flagging spirit. It is the image of the "fairest Lord Jesus," his soul's "delight and glory and crown"; the real Captain of the host, the typical Crusader, after whom all loyal hearts must bear the cross; who should be holden of no sepulchre, however He might hallow it. All the desert was filled with the sweet, low music of that heavenly vision and celestial song. The wild waves of the Levant sang it, as his vessel clove the seas in the track of Paul. It sounded above the shout of captains and the roar of multitudes and the rattle of munitions of war. And by and by it formed itself into a song and a strain, which sang itself to his ear all day and in his dreams at night. It was the marching music of his life.

And one day, in the cool shadow of some rock or under the brilliant skies of some Eastern night, he penned it down, words and melody, on a stray fragment of parchment and placed it in his helmet. Next day the "wild beleaguerers" swooped down upon the faint and gallant host, and some Saracen scimetar smote out in blinding pain and darkness the earthly dream and fragmentary note of that weary head, and the empty casque rolled away to rust upon the plain. But no, not empty—for by and by some desert wanderer, stumbling upon it, discovers the bit of parch-

ment and the scrawled song with its music bars, and he carries the crusader's hymn to England or France or Burgundy, to testify to those at home of the dying soldier's faith, and perhaps to stir up other brave and pious hearts to seek the Holy Land.

With some such thought as this, do I take up the present volume. It is the legacy and last word to the world of as gallant and consecrated a heart as ever wore knightly armor or followed the holy cross. He was a crusader, not of the letter, but of the spirit. The fair image of the Lord Jesus was his inspiration, the more sustaining as his feet grew wearier with the march of life. It filled the chambers of his brain with a sweetness of melody and a grandeur of thought which he felt he must try to interpret to others. Hence this book, which appears after he himself has gone from us, is, as it were, taken from his very helmet—even "the hope of salvation."

I speak of this, because otherwise the true significance of the book will not be caught. It differs from all else that Dr. Baker has written, in that it was no mere "literary" production. He put into it the force of his fine imagination and vigorous style—he could not help doing so in whatever he wrote. But it was pre-eminently a *heart*-book, and can only be fairly and fully appreciated when approached as such by the critic or the reader.

It is, of course, a Biblical study, which, while some of its conclusions may not be accepted by a severe hermeneutical judgment, abounds in striking and suggestive bits of exegesis. The author's confinement to the house during its preparation put it out of his power to make as extensive a comparison of authorities as he might otherwise have done. But, after all, the comparison on which he depended was that of Scripture with Scripture. Laying his hand upon the Book of books one day, he said: "All that

I want is here. No commentator can throw the light upon any passage of Scripture which is not shed even more clearly by some other passage, somewhere to be found if searched for."

Another commentary—too much ignored in Bible study—which he called to his aid, was a sanctified imagination. "The Ten Theophanies" is essentially a prose-poem. Its glowing periods, and at times almost startling conceptions, are not to be gauged exclusively by the sharp analysis or the cold criticism of grammatical interpretation. There are paths in the records of divine wisdom where Christian faith is more clear-eyed and sure-footed than the most scholastic sight, and where—as in a palimpsest—the heat of an adoring and zealous heart will bring out a deeper spiritual truth between the lines and under the letter. The spirit in which this book was written may be gathered from the following extract:

"He who tries to write these lines cannot see them for happy tears; he trembles, unable to contain yet wholly unable to express the thought—Immanuel! God with us! Only the large language used by the saints in light may express that consciousness of our ever-present Lord which ceases to be a mere belief, and, striking as into the very arteries and veins, bone and brain, becomes part of the circulation and constitution—the life—of the believer."

Dr. Baker's life was one of varied and even romantic experience, and his inner life had been of corresponding depth and incident. And all his writings were the outcome, if not the rescript, of what he had seen and felt. His father, Rev. Daniel Baker, D.D., was a native of Georgia, and was a pioneer missionary of the Presbyterian Church in Texas, then a new and unexplored Territory. He was, himself, born in Washington, D. C., in 1825, and the first forty years of his life were passed in the South, with the

exception of a term of study at Princeton. His first essay at book-making was the life of his father. His earlier settlements in the ministry were at Galveston and Austin, Texas. "The New Timothy," one of his most popular and realistic novels, is based upon his own observations and adventures as a young clergyman in those then frontier settlements. "The Virginians in Texas" utilizes the same fund of personal knowledge concerning the almost untrodden wildernesses of that region.

In his Southern experiences is also to be found the genesis of "Carter Quarterman," "Colonel Dinwoddie," and "A Year Worth Living," but especially of "Inside: A Chronicle of Secession." This latter was written during the years of the great Rebellion, while he was standing firm at his post in Austin, maintaining his own loyalty to the Union, and keeping his church to its connection with the Presbyterian General Assembly of the North.

The courage necessary to this almost unparalleled achievement can only be appreciated by those who passed through these trying times. His friend, Rev. Charles Gillette, also firm in his devotion to the Union, was silenced by his Bishop, leaving Dr. Baker alone, the only loyal clergyman in the place, in charge of a church. One of his elders, who assisted in forming the Southern church, writes since his death : . . . . "Both churches are debtors to his earnest, active, zealous labors in behalf of the Gospel, down to the day he transferred his ministry to another field."

The very popular and successful book, "His Majesty Myself," with other of his later novels, drew upon his recollections of Princeton and his studies of the religious and social life of the North, to which he removed in 1865, and where he was pastor of churches at Zanesville, O., Newburyport and South Boston, Mass., and Philadelphia.

The book which is herewith introduced to the reader is no less the outgrowth of its author's experience—the profounder phenomena of the inner life. His nature was deeply religious. Everything he wrote shows how inseparable religion was from all his thinking and doing. He was not the one to rest in a mere acquiescent reception, however sincere, of the faith which came to him by inheritance and education. He must make his father's God his own God, and his Church's creed his own creed. And there was not a truth, of all which he held so firmly, that had not been tested and affirmed by his independent investigations of Scripture, and by the response of his own hungering and thirsting heart. There was no question or speculation which had not been met by him in the way, and no struggle which he had not passed through for himself. The problems which especially exercised his mind were those relating to the providential government of mankind, now and in all ages and in the ages to come. His mental habit, and study of men and of human life as a writer of fiction, doubtless contributed to render this class of questions peculiarly interesting as well as complex to his mind. Often, even during the past few years, has life seemed to him a fearful and inexplicable Sphinx which made the world a desert about it,—no less an enigma, and almost a muddle, to his reason because accepted without revolt by his faith.

There were many things about God's dealings with himself which he could not understand, and ofttimes found himself struggling to submit to. This was naturally the case in the earlier stages of those physical disabilities which removed him from his beloved work as a pastor and preacher of the Gospel, and which threatened to bring to a speedy close his entire work on earth. But the very imminence and pressure of the issue hastened its complete

and final settlement. He had never doubted nor rebelled. He only wondered, and distressed his sympathetic heart, as did David when he said: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me?" And his emergence into the light, and into that large place where one gets beyond both the questionings and the need of answering them, was on the same side of the Slough of Despond as that from which David's clear and cheering voice comes down to us through the ages.

But by the broader and brighter light of Christianity he was enabled not merely to "hope in God," but to rejoice in Christ Jesus as All in all,—not only the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth, but the end of all the divine government; the key to all mysteries; the missing link in all unadjusted relations; the Lord of all life; the Alpha and Omega, and every intervening letter in the alphabet of God and man. The name of Jesus was the "open sesame" which unlocked the treasure-caves of God's providence, and caused the desert of this world, despite its staring Sphinx, to bud and blossom like the rose.

As the outward man perished, the joy of the Lord was more and more the strength of his heart. It was most affecting when his voice had grown very weak, to hear him recite as was his wont, in a sort of soliloquy, his favorite texts in honor of Christ and in remembrance of Him. One day he began thus feebly, "I know that my Redeemer liveth"; but as he spoke his whole frame seemed to glow, and his voice grew strong and full with a triumphant ring which was melody in the ears of those who heard him.

He did not cling to life for its own sake, nor even chiefly for the singularly happy and loving home-life with which he was blessed. But not being aware of the desperateness of his malady, he was long in relinquishing the hope of recovering strength to work for his Master,—that "after

all he might some day be counted worthy to talk of Christ." But it was always "God's will": in that he was perfectly acquiescent, and he often said he had no other will of his own.

One day he said: "I would be willing now to preach sitting, if only I might talk about Christ" (this notwithstanding his sensitiveness, to a painful degree, about showing in any way his increasing physical weakness). As this hope of speaking face to face with men about Christ was abandoned, he turned with eagerness to the thought of commending his Lord to them by the pen. He had, at this time, a large number of applications from periodicals for short articles, some of them specifying "something humorous." He always regarded such calls as in the way of his avocation in life, and made an effort to fulfil these. But his heart was in other work. Every thought and feeling centered in the all-absorbing and intense desire to testify distinctively and emphatically for Christ.

It was then that he turned with ardor to the preparation of the book which is now, by other hands, laid before the reader. It was no new theme to him, but now it assumed more grandeur and significance than ever. He made a renewed study of Scripture in relation to it. He wrote and studied with the energy and enthusiasm of his healthiest and strongest days. It was an indescribable joy and consolation to be thus employed. Every part and incident of the work was of intense interest. "This," he wrote me at the time, "is the one book upon which I rest my whole heart." And again: "My entire religion is Christ. Therefore it was, and is, that this manuscript is a child of my soul beyond anything I have ever attempted. Please God, I will make it a book which shall set forth the Master as clearly as is possible to me." Having submitted the manuscript to one who he believed would be a friendly

but faithful critic, he was unable for days, in his debilitated condition, to gather "nerve" to open the letter containing his friend's opinion, "so foolishly had I set my heart upon my attempt to tell about those appearances of our Lord." He was unspeakably relieved when that verdict was found to be favorable. (He had always the most modest and distrustful sense of his own literary capabilities and claim to success.) It was also a happy hour when he received Mr. Randolph's proposal to publish it. And he longed to see the proof-sheets, that he might embody the new suggestions which were all the while springing up in his mind. The work was kindly hastened by the publisher, in order that he might have the pleasure of seeing it in print. But God's messengers came more swiftly, and he was first to behold the King Himself face to face.

I dwell upon these things not with any purpose of writing a biography of the author, but only, in some wise, of the book, which was truly a spiritual birth. Have I not rightly said: "This is a heart-book"? Let it be so received and judged. It will not fail to be blessed to the poor in spirit, and to them that hunger to have the secret of God revealed to them in Christ Jesus. The conditions of its appreciative and profitable reception may be best illustrated by a quotation from the book itself:

"If you who read have never known of the almost infinite stringency of the world upon you, and at every step; if you have not gone to God and prayed, and prayed, and prayed only apparently to be repulsed—yes, and seemingly cruelly repulsed—you have no business with this page. It is to such as have known, long known, the agony of prayer long despised, rejected, refused, these lines are addressed."

As the time of his departure drew nigh, the "strait betwixt two" became less and less a trial of his faith, and his desire to depart and be with Christ was more in the

ascendant. This blessed hope he voiced in some verses entitled "The Truce of God," written a Sabbath or two before he died, and published after his death in the *Congregationalist*. I quote the concluding stanza:

"I know how very nearly
I draw unto those realms.
I know that it is merely
A film which overwhelms
These eyes from rapturous seeing,
These ears from rapturous sound,
This self from God-like being,
This life from broken bound.
Melt, oh thou film-flake, faster,
Rend, thou thin gauze, in two,
Eternal heaven, o'ermaster,
Break in effulgence through!
Oh, sacred day, o'erflow thee!
Rush Sabbaths into one,
That earth and heaven may know the
Eternal rest begun!"

When he could no longer speak, in answer to the inquiry "Is Jesus all?" he said, "All!" This was his last distinct utterance. Shortly after, motioning for a pencil and paper, he wrote: "I have made ready." Only one thing more he wrote—a request for the utmost quiet. He asked to be laid in his swinging chair, reached up, and himself adjusted the cords which lowered it, and sweetly fell asleep. He had entered upon his eternal rest. A new "Theophany" had dawned upon his enraptured spirit!

F. N. Zabriskie.

"Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find;
The sacred, just and awful Three
Are terrors to my mind.

"But when Immanuel's face appears,
My hopes, my joys begin;
His grace relieves my slavish fears,
His blood doth cleanse my sin.

"Let Jews on their own Law rely,
And Greeks of Wisdom boast,
I love the Incarnate mystery
And there I fix my trust."

OLD HYMN.

A PAUSE UPON THE THRESHOLD.

"The highest, clearest idea I have of God," said a Unitarian minister, swept away for the moment by the irresistible fact, "is that He is an infinite Christ." This Christ is the Supreme Object during eternity of the redeemed soul; is it not possible that before we enter upon that unending life, there may be certain aspects of this infinite Son of God, upon which, although not wholly new to us, we have never as yet sufficiently dwelt?

Strange to say there is, so far as the writer can learn, no volume as yet in any language which treats of the Ten Theophanies, or revelations of our Lord to men in Old Testament days. If the writer is correct in this, whatever else may be said of this attempt, it is at least *unique*.

This is all the stranger, since there are few appetites stronger among men than that which feeds itself upon narrations of remarkable events. It is not the Arabian story-teller alone, who gathers around him an audience of breathless hearers; in all lands and always, men and women become as little children again when their attention is called to tales of romance, and the folk-lore or fairy stories of a people have been among the most effective means of their education,—a fact recognized by our Lord to such a degree that without a parable spake He not to those about Him. Surely He had

this in view in leaving upon record these ten manifestations of himself to men as God, yet man. These manifestations are as historical as any other portions of Scripture, and are as much more interesting and thrilling than many portions as the deep things of God are more so than those of men.

All Oriental religions are alive and breathing with the *avatars*, or comings of gods in the flesh. Homer tells us how Mars and Venus fought in the battles about "windy Troy," were wounded, and fled howling to heaven from the fight. Virgil relates how Jupiter, Mercury and Neptune, visiting Hyrieus of Tanagra in the guise of men, rewarded their host by the gift of a long-desired son. It is he, too, who narrates how Jupiter and Mercury, when insulted as strange men by an inhospitable neighborhood, were so warmly entertained by Philemon and Baucis that, while the surrounding region was turned into a lake, their humble cottage was transformed into a temple and themselves translated to the skies.

Evidently these myths of the heathen are but far-off and incoherent echoes of the real events narrated in this volume. Those myths are but detached incidents, mere anecdote, floating like a chance straw or leaf upon the current, while the appearances of Christ are inseparable and essential parts of, and in closest relation and sequence to, the all-important Scripture narrative in which they are imbedded. They are not merely the more brilliantly colored bits of stone in the grand mosaic. Pluck them out, and you find that the historical picture is as much marred and made incoherent as if you had stricken out instead the calling of

Abraham, the leadership of Joshua, the story of Joseph, of Daniel, of David; nay, you may almost as well omit the interview of our Lord with the woman at the well, as leave out the account of the coming of the same Christ, centuries before, to Jacob or to Gideon.

We have hailed the birth in our own day of a brand-new science, that of comparative religion. One thing which is being brought out into broad day from beneath its scalpel and microscope, is the universal, invariable fact that man as man craves with his deepest hunger, with thirst more parching than any, after his Maker. Men, it also insists, always and everywhere demand that this bread shall be given them upon the plate, this water in the cup, of some visible emblem, symbol, representation of the unseen Deity. There must be a something wherein the Almighty condenses his infinitude, in which He lodges himself, though it be but as in a tent and for the moment. The Greek glories in the ivory and gold of his Jupiter Tonans. The Mohammedan, in the very act of demolishing every other idol, worships the Kaaba, a meteorite fallen at Mecca. The Jews made an idol of Sabbath and Temple and superbly transcribed Law. While Nero was so much of a fetich-worshipper as to put his trust in an inch or so of black bone.

"Struggling as I am," exclaims every soul that God has made, "in the roaring tide, sweeping me stunned and blinded toward the precipice of my grave, I must grasp God, though it be but in a splinter or a straw; I drown otherwise, in the abysmal depths of my hopeless ignorance."

How is it possible but that our Father should have

the tenderest pity for His orphaned children? Are they not seeking thus in their poor way after God, if haply they might feel after and find Him? God so loved the world that, kindling within us this strangest of all desires, He gives to satisfy it his only Son, and to death. The victim upon the Jewish as upon every altar the globe around, the brazen serpent lifted up in the Hebrew camp and in the mysterious tree and serpent worship of myriads outside that camp—these are no truer shadows of Christ to come than, each in its own degree, every fetich or idol since man fell, horribly unlike Christ as they are, and much as Satan has striven to make each an end and not a mere means to an end.

"What can I know of anything unseen," exclaims the soul, "unless it be by some word, written, printed or spoken? How much more is it impossible to know the infinite Creator unless it be by the Word of God? Nor will his mere Word suffice, although it be carved upon tables of stone, or spoken in articulate thunder from Sinai, unless there be more than that. Lo! a golden calf rears itself in the very shadow of the blazing mount! The Word must be made flesh, and dwell among us. What nation but has had its *Avatar*, its series of *Avatars*? Barbarossa groans under his German cliffs, sure to come again. The Spanish Cortez was the Montezuma of an older Mexico, come back; as was Pizarro, of the Peruvian Incas. "To me," cries every soul, "God is nothing unless I can fall at his very feet; yea, can cast my arms about Him, can press Him to my very heart."

Therefore a religion of symbols of a Christ to come, from the foundation of the world. Therefore,

the Babe in the manger; the boy growing in wisdom and stature there in Nazareth; the young man beside the water, to whom the Baptist can point and say, Behold!—the teacher so seated upon the mount that all men can see, while they hear. Therefore the Friend by whom even the leper is touched, whom Bartimeus persists in crying after until he too can look upon, as well as listen to, the man whose hand lifts while his omnipotence heals.

As the keeper of Israel, God neither slumbers nor sleeps; yet must He in Christ be weary at the well, and lie unconscious in the hinder part of the boat. Infinitely independent as He is, He must come down to the asking for a cup of water from one woman, the weaving of garments from another during life, as of napkin and shroud after death. His face is that from which a world shall fly terrified, yet must it also be spit upon. Upon His shoulders rests creation; they are bared also to the scourge. His brows burn with the diadem of all empire, yet must they wear the crown of thorns, be beaded with the sweat of toil, the death-damps of Gethsemane and Golgotha. All things were made by Him, and his goings forth have been from of old, even from everlasting; yet hands and feet both must be fastened to the cross. Although as infinite in joy as in wisdom or power, yet must He suffer; the Prince of Life, He must die. He filleth all in all, yet must a stone shut and seal Him into a sepulchre. Fresh from trampling death beneath his feet, He says like any other familiar friend, "Children, have ye here any meat?" and takes a piece of a broiled fish and of a honeycomb and eats before them. "Be-

hold," He says to his disciples, "my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." When doubting Thomas comes in, He says, "Reach hither thy finger and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing."

Believing in what? Believing at one breath in two things concerning Christ, things separated hitherto by more than the diameters of the universe. That this is a dead man risen to life? More than that. Thomas must believe that this man, executed as a felon a few days before, is also the eternal God. "My Lord!" he gasps, "and my God!" And he does believe. Why? Because there stands the object of all adoration, looking, man to man, into the eyes of Thomas, offering His sacred person to the sight and hearing, to the very grasp wherewith Thomas would hold the hand of his bride, would lift his babe to his lips, would clasp for a blessing the knees of a venerated father.

Because such palpable presentation is essential, therefore does God take upon himself the form of a man, before his birth as afterward. The very frequency of the Theophany is because of a perpetual need of men for God, which can be satisfied in no other way.

Is it strange, then, that to men and women of Old Testament times too, this Man who is also God should step forth from the haze of Hebrew symbolism, should stand forth upon the earth we tread, seen of men, heard, held, a living person, Jesus anticipating his own birth?

"But He was not recognized as God in flesh by those

to whom He thus appeared!" Why, then, in almost every instance do they shudder, the interview ended, lest having seen God they should perish? Moreover, was He known and accepted as such by those who beheld Him afterward in Bethlehem, Nazareth, Bethany, Jerusalem? Instead of this, He was rejected and slain. The truth is, mortal flesh could not have endured to know at the time the divinity of the Son of God. Remember also, "no man knoweth who the Son is but the Father; and who the Father is but the Son, and he to whom the Son shall reveal Him."

It is well to remember that the Theophanies upon which we are about to enter have an interest and value far beyond the few moments during which, and the one or two persons with whom, they took place. For ages have they helped men, and by millions, to know that much more of Christ, even as they will help myriads more to whom they are to come. Not in this world alone. We will conjecture nothing as to what knowledge the people of other planets and worlds may have of the Son of God; but can there be a doubt that the Scripture story will be matter of interest forever to the saints in light? If so, surely those parts of Scripture story which come like the Theophanies among the idyls, lyrics, we might almost say, will be those in which the chiefest pleasure is found. Yes, these manifestations are valuable as having not a transient but an eternal use toward that much more knowledge, in heaven as on earth, of the Son of God.

It will speedily be seen, that no learned disquisition has been attempted here upon the Elohistic or Jehovistic names of Deity. Accepting the translation of "Jehovah" by "Lord," the plain and generally accepted

meaning of Scripture has been closely followed. Even if the writer possessed the ability and scholarship necessary to anything beyond this, he knows enough of the controversies involved to be aware that nothing whatever is settled by them. Cleaving, very much like a little child, to the inspired story, the writer is more than content with what the inspiring Spirit has caused simple believers in all ages to accept and enjoy. Beyond any other period, and in an ever-increasing degree toward the hour when every eye shall see Him, there is this marked peculiarity of our day, that men are everywhere saying, "Sir, we would see Jesus." Beyond presenting Him to the mind and heart of any who may read these lines, the writer has no intention. What other intention can there be? Since to him who sees Jesus, all else follows!

There are many who will not accept what is endeavored to be set forth in the first Theophany; doubtless there are minor matters which will be held in doubt in every Theophany. Beyond this there is not a word, it is hoped, in the book to which any believer in the Divinity of Christ can object; save indeed the imperfect manner in which the work is done. Our Lord is set forth in the New Testament in his varied and manifold excellence. In these revelations of himself in the Old Testament is He also shown to us. It is by viewing Him, thus photographed as by the seven-lined pencils of light, from these two opposite points, that He stands out from the sacred page as in a stereoscope, pre-eminent in all things, our living, loving Lord.

For the easier travelling of the reader, certain hindering stones have been taken out of the way and heaped together at the end of the volume, in the precise He-

brew names for God applied in the Theophanies to the Son of God. A close examination of these will make it evident that, in these showings of himself, our Saviour assumes and declares his Divinity in every possible way, and throughout. The use of these sacred names, the very variation of them, shuts and seals the question of his Supreme Godhead. It may be by reason of some radical, organic defect, and of the brain itself, which compels one to such conclusion; but if there is anything in morals or mathematics more demonstrative of the divinity of the Son of God, the writer does not know of it. In all the world there is nothing upon which the soul can rest with such absolute repose as upon certainty, thoroughly ascertained and absolute certainty. What certainty more absolute and restful than this? The entire and final satisfaction of the intellect herein is only equalled by that of the heart.

If there should be other editions of this little volume, they shall be enriched by whatever may be advanced in the way of modification, correction, suggestion. The writer has found in the preparation of these pages a pleasure beyond words, because of what he has learned in addition of Christ. How cordially then will any and every least hint be accepted if it aids toward making clearer to him, and possibly by him to others, the very face and aspect of the Lord!

At least, as we have to remind ourselves all along, "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost." That this spirit may be given to every one who turns these pages, is the most sincere prayer of him who has written them.

Boston, Mass., 1883.

THE TEN THEOPHANIES.

I.

(B. C. 1913.—Gen. xiv. 18–20).

CHRIST, KING AND PRIEST FOR THE WORLD OUTSIDE THE CHURCH.

Electricity has existed in our atmosphere from the beginning. Not until to-day has it been converged into man-made suns, which abolish night. Jesus the Messiah pervades all Scripture, even as the electric influence permeates the air; let us see if He is not (may we say it?) so brought into convergence in the fourteenth chapter of Genesis, that we may behold therein and therefrom a Light illumining the world such as we had not before imagined.

It is in the year 1913 before Christ. Eight years before, Abram had been led by God out of Haran. The promise has been made to him of a home for his descendants in the land in which he now sojourns, and that his posterity is to be more in number than the dust. His nephew, Lot, has foolishly settled himself in one of the cities of the plains. A band of Asian sheiks have attacked those cities, and have departed rejoicing in their plentiful plunder and prisoners. Summoning his allies, and arming his servants, Abram has pursued after the robbers, has slain them and brought back their prey.

When, forty years after, Abraham by divine command places Isaac upon the altar, the precise mountain-top of this strikingly symbolical act of sacrifice is so carefully assigned that it cannot but be Calvary. A like thing is ordered now. An event is about to befall, and the locality thereof is carefully given. To the Patriarch, returning from victorious war, there appears that mysterious personage whose very name has stood since then as a proverb of all perplexity. "And Melchizedek, King of Salem, brought forth bread and wine: and he was the Priest of the most high God. And he blessed him and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth. And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all."

We see, from the narrative going before, that no less than twelve armed chieftains have been engaged with each other in war to the death. Suddenly there comes, and as into the centre of the storm of strife, a king apart from them all, greater than all, who is distinctively Prince of Salem,—that is, of Peace. The region in which the war began is one which has sunk into such wickedness, that the hurricanes of fire are already gathering about it. So polluted is the very soil that, after being swept by the besom of wrath, it is to be buried deep down and forever under a sea of salt. The king, who so strangely shows himself, is one whose name means "the King my Righteousness," reminding us of that Christ whose name is "The Lord our Righteousness."

Of the twelve, there is one who is in every sense the

superior of them all. It is Abram. Soon after this war, God is to enter into a special covenant with Abram, sealed by awful sacrifices, and by which he is separated and set off by himself more than ever from the world. Leading him out under the midnight sky, the promise of a peculiar posterity is to be sealed to him by the Almighty, who declares that the stars themselves are not more in number than that posterity shall come to be. Afterward God is to visit Abram at his tent in the appearance of a man, who eats, converses with him, and to whom Abram is to make supplication for Lot. By these acts, and circumcisions added thereto, this Patriarch and his descendants are to be set apart from all other nations. To them is to be made the only Revelation of God to man. The Scriptures of the Old and of the New Testaments are to be entrusted to them. By and through them is to come that Messiah, who is to be the Saviour of the world; and the one temple of God on earth, the one divinely appointed priesthood and sacrifice, are to be and remain among them exclusively, as a system of symbols of this Messiah.

Here is, then, a critical moment. The torrent of human life is to flow steadily on, broadening and deepening, into the heathen nations of the world, to whom no special revelation is to be given from God. At this exact point, however, in Abram a new people is to be begun. In him and his descendants a stream of life, banked in to itself, is to flow, widening and deepening always, but always separate and distinct from the heathen peoples to the end of time. At this critical juncture it is, that this Priest-King appears. It is to Abram alone that He shows himself.

In four of the nine revelations of Himself to Abraham and his posterity, food is introduced. Now this august Person brings in his hand no flesh of calf and kid, as afterward; it is bread and wine. He who brings it is a priest, yet here is no blazing altar, no bleeding victim. To-day Christ, our High-Priest, brings to us at each communion that which signifies in the simplest possible way his own flesh and blood,—that is, Himself, our atoning sacrifice. So was it, that day, with the father of the faithful. In him, and in his posterity, are to be seen two thousand years of types and shadows. At the hands of his Lord, Abram now eats and drinks of that which is to be signified by weary centuries of symbolism. In all lands and languages, in fact, the soul sets forth its intuition of sin and Saviour by sacrifice. This is the essential meaning of it all, in its primeval as in its final simplicity. And here is Christ himself, King and Priest, the one atoning Saviour of a sinful world.

As will be more fully seen in the notes at the end, in closest connection of meaning with this is

(I.) *The remarkable name which is here given to God.* Throughout all Scripture His name is so varied as to express in some way a relation to His covenant with Abraham and his descendants. How continually is He spoken of as the "God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob!" There is one other title, "the Most High God," which takes its remarkable significance, as distinguished from all Jewish usage, by the fact that it is upon the lips distinctively of those not Jewish.

(1) It is used by devils. "What have I to do with

Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of the Most High God?" is the cry to Jesus of the man torn among the tombs by an unclean spirit. "These men," the possessed damsel of Philippi cries after Paul and Silas, "are the servants of the Most High God."

(2) It is the name applied to the Almighty when his dealing with the wide world apart from Judea is referred to, as when Moses says, "The Most High divided to the nations their inheritance when He separated the sons of Adam."

(3) It is used when a worship outside of and wider than that of the Jews is spoken of, as when Stephen said, "The Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands."

(4) When God, apart from Church or nation as the God of nature, is meant: "The Lord thundered from heaven, and the Most High uttered his voice."

(5) This is almost the only name given to the Creator by heathen kings, as of Babylon: "I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High," is the boast ascribed to one of these by the prophet. "Ye servants of the Most High God, come hither!" is the call of Nebuchadnezzar to the Hebrews in the fiery furnace. It is so when Daniel interprets the king's dream. In his proclamation thereafter, the king says: "Nebuchadnezzar the king unto all people, nations and languages, that dwell in all the earth; I thought it good to show the signs and wonders that the High God hath wrought toward me,"—that is, the God high above all gods; and the king goes on to say, that his own downfall was "to the intent that the living may know that the Most High ruleth in the

kingdom of men." To the end, this is the distinctive name given to God: "This is the decree of the Most High." "Till then, know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men," is the language of Daniel, accepting this as the title, wholly distinct from that of Jewish usage, by which the Supreme Deity of the heathen is signified. "Until then, know that the Most High ruleth,"—it is repeated, as the end of his downfall, "I, Nebuchadnezzar, blessed the Most High, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion."

(6) As Daniel used this title when speaking to the king of the Supreme Being, who had made no revelation of Himself to the heathen, so does he cling to it when he speaks of the coming kingdom of Christ. It is "the saints of the Most High," who "shall take the kingdom." "Judgment was given to the saints of the Most High." The Anti-Christ "shall speak great words against the Most High," "shall wear out the saints of the Most High." In the glorious ending of all, "The kingdom shall be given under the whole heaven to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him."

Here, then, is a royal title, of which two things are true: first, it is very rarely used in connection with Jewish worship; second, it is invariably used by the heathen, and by those who speak to the heathen, as the name peculiar to the unrevealed Maker and Sovereign of all. Victoria is Queen in England, and not Empress; over the two hundred and fifty millions of India she is known always as Empress, never as Queen. When, then, we hear this name of "Most High" upon the

lips of this Priest-King, we cannot help knowing that He speaks as identifying Himself not with the Jews, but with all the world outside of Jewry and of that Christianity which has flowered therefrom as its supreme result. Described as "the Priest of the Most High God," He blesses Abram, saying: "Blessed be Abram of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be the Most High God which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand." This un-Jewish, un-ecclesiastical title is reaffirmed when this God is declared to be not the God of this nation or that: He is "possessor of heaven and earth," the entire world being swept by the title beneath His sway.

The impression made upon Abram is evident, for immediately thereafter he swears to the king of Sodom: "I have lifted up mine hand unto the Lord (Jehovah), the Most High God, the possessor of heaven and earth," thus coupling the Abrahamic name of God (*i. e.* "the Lord") and identifying it with the Sovereign of the whole world.

Like the great crown diamond in the diadem of the Autocrat of all the Russias, and which was worn, ages ago, by untamed savages among the wild fastnesses of the Ural Mountains, so is this significant title of Most High a barbaric gem, as it were, in the crown of Him who is not only King of Zion, but Autocrat and Emperor of all lands, of all ages.

Thus, and from the hour of the separation of the people of God (Jew and Christian) from the rest of the race, Jesus Christ is pleased to manifest himself to Abram as He who is King and Priest to the world outside his own church.

(II.) *Observe the many ways in which Scripture, incidentally or directly, confirms this:*

(1) By the twofold superiority of this Priest-King to Abram. As the Apostle afterward argued, that superiority is set at rest when the Patriarch is blessed of Him, for it is the greater who blesses the less; also when Abram, standing for the Levitical priesthood yet to be, pays tithes as to a Priest superior to that. It is tithes he pays to the great High-Priest; it is tribute he pays to the King of kings.

(2) That Melchizedek is none other than Christ, is plain from the express declaration of Scripture. In one place it is written of the Father: "Unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever." In another, "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a Priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek." This is the first vivid flash of light, more than a thousand years after, upon the majestic Person who appeared to Abram. Accepting this declaration of the inspired psalmist, the equally inspired writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews connects the assertion of the sonship of Christ with his priesthood, as set forth by Melchizedek, identifies and makes them one. "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." "Thou art a Priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek." Having touched this long-slumbering chord, it is as if this later servant of God never wearied of its music. Over and over, and over again, he iterates and reiterates the fact, and why? Because he is insisting upon the perishable nature of all lesser priesthoods than that of the eternal Son of God, who appeared as Priest and King to Abram before the Jewish church was set up,

and who would endure, King and Priest forever, after it had passed away.

While the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews dips his pen in ink, he can almost hear the mailed tread of the Roman host gathering, under Vespasian and Titus, about the walls of doomed Jerusalem. In a little while the temple, the city, the nation, will have passed away in blood and smoke, in flame and ashes; the people of God, blown by his wrathful breath over the whole earth—the dust of a dead Dispensation. What matters that to him, since all these things are, at best, but the poor symbols of Him who ever liveth to make intercession for us? The fabled river sparkled in the sunshine—broad, pure, deep, strong; plunging beneath the surface, it flows underground, but giving life to all that grows above it; far away it reappears again to the sunshine—strong, deep, pure, broad as ever. The Priest-King, bearing bread and wine to Abram, may have disappeared beneath the outward surface and show of things for so long. But all along, and out of sight, is He cause of all verdure and life. Reappearing in the crucified Christ, He endures to eternity to come as from eternity past—yesterday, to-day, forever the same!

There are very many Scriptures to the same effect. We see Him as He confronts Abram, before God's covenant is ratified with the Patriarch by solemn sacrifice, and at the birth of Isaac by the seal of circumcision. He towers superior to Abram, blessing the Patriarch, giving him the bread and wine of his body to be broken, his blood to be shed—for whom? "He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but

also for the sins of the whole world." "The man whose name," says the prophet, "is The Branch . . . . shall grow up *out of his place* . . . . and He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and He shall be a Priest upon his throne; and *they that are far off* shall come and build in the temple of the Lord."

We cannot conceive of this Joseph coming up out of the pit and the dungeon of death for Jew alone, or for Christian. "He is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over the wall"; who, outside of temple and church, doth bud and blossom, and fill the face of the world with all it has had of fruit in every land. But the many Scriptures to the same effect come out as in intermittent flashes, as we consider, for instance:

(III.) *If Christ in Melchizedek is indeed the first of the Theophanies, the first of the revelations of God to man, why has this fact been so long overlooked?* Why is it that of all the fathers, Ambrose stands almost alone in acceptance of the fact?

The reason is evident. Only of late have we learned to behold in Christ much which was never thought of before. See Him standing, for instance, upon the mount, and saying as his last and most urgent command to his disciples: "Go ye into all the world! Preach the Gospel to every creature!" Notwithstanding which, when a little over a century ago a young minister dared to rise in the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Scotland, and humbly suggest sending missionaries to the heathen, one of the gravest and most devout divines there thundered out: "Sit

down, young man; when God wishes to convert the pagan world, He can do it without *your* assistance!"

If our Lord giving such charge upon the Mount of Ascension was so completely ignored, may it not be possible that we have failed all these weary centuries to understand this other truth? The fact is, that the pressure upon us of the outside world is compelling us to-day to see and understand as for the first time this revelation of God to men,—which rightfully takes rank as the first of them all. Can it be possible (we begin to demand of ourselves) that from creation He who "hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, that they should seek the Lord if haply they might feel after Him and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us"—is it possible He should so concentrate the revelation of Himself upon a fraction of the race as to have had no reference save to these? "In Him we live and move and have our being," the apostle urges upon the Athenians, clinching what God says in him by what He has also said by "certain of your own poets," when they too asserted, "We are also His offspring." As the Almighty breaks down all barriers between the peoples, the cry is going out from every Christian heart and conscience as never before, "O that Ishmael might live before Thee!"

Thus it is, as was said at the outset, that the very appeal to us of the world outside Christendom is itself explaining to us, how that in the august Priest and King who shows himself to Abram we behold our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, standing outside of and apart from covenant and covenant people, circum-

cision, rescue from Egypt, Sinai, Canaan, Tabernacle, Temple, Scripture, and every anointed king and priest less than himself, of whom all are but transient symbols. As Eden and Heaven are superior to Canaan lying between, so is the manifestation of Himself by Christ to Abram at once simpler and clearer than much which lies between that and the perfect showing of Himself to us in the glorious end.

For ages has this Theophany been overlooked! So have been the coal and oil, the iron, silver, gold and all precious stones, slumbering in the heart of the planet until the hour arrives when they are brought to light, as by the pressing needs of men.

For consider,

(IV.) *How impossible it is to separate from the Son of God all who have been, although outside of revealed religion, the leaders of religious thought and action—to how many myriads more than within the pale of Revelation!*

How strangely and suddenly, for instance, does Balaam flash upon the page of Scripture. When Balak, king of Moab, can do nothing else to destroy Israel, journeying through his realm he invokes upon the invaders the curse of this son of Beor,—Moabite? Chaldean? Who can say who he is? Two things we know: that he is not a Hebrew, but bitterly hostile to them instead; and that he is an inspired prophet. In vain does Balak offer him great rewards, lead him about from one point of view of the camp of Israel to another; he can not curse, he can only bless. Sacrifice may be heaped upon sacrifice, reward upon reward; the result is the

same. How strange it is and striking, that he should use the same appellation of the Almighty employed by Melchizedek! How remarkable, too, that his clearest prophecy should be of the Messiah to come! "He hath said, which heard the words of God and knew the knowledge of the Most High, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open: I shall see Him, but not now; I shall behold Him, but not nigh; there shall come a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel. . . . . Out of Jacob shall come He that shall have dominion."

A Star? A King? No wonder, then, that from the world outside Jewry came the three "wise men to Jerusalem, saying: Where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his Star in the East, and are come to worship Him!" In strict keeping with it all, is the fact that Balaam makes merchandise of his inspiration; that he suggests to Balak to seduce Israel into slaughter, by seducing them into just those peculiar sins which as invariably accompanied the heathenism of old as of to-day; that he is rebuked of an ass; that he perishes at last, slain by the sword. All the more vividly against the blackness of his life shines the vividness of his prophecy. He and his inspiration, are these not from Him who is Priest and King outside of and apart from covenant revelation?

Consider the story of Job. What does it matter to us who he was; where and when he lived; or by whom his story is written? That he was a man, and not a myth, we know—if only because over and yet over again is he coupled upon the lips of Ezekiel with Noah and Daniel, as a man specially regarded of God. The one

thing perfectly clear in addition is, that he is wholly apart from the Abrahamic dispensation. Not a syllable is there in his story concerning temple or Scripture, although there is of sacrifice—since that was the prophetic intuition of the entire race everywhere of a Christ to die for men. Study the book of Job. All natural theology finds in it a complete epitome.

Like Balaam, he too is inspired to speak of the Messiah. Stumbling in the dense darkness of a world into which had come no revelation of the Maker of all, bewildered by the calumnies of his false advisers, by the whirlwinds of undeserved affliction, he cries: "O that I knew where I might find Him! that I might come even to his seat! Behold I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I can not perceive Him; on the left hand, where He doth work, but I can not behold Him; He hideth himself on the right hand that I can not see Him." "He is not a man as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together into judgment; neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both." Then there kindles the dim gleam of a light: "If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, then He is gracious unto him and saith: Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom." And then, as the full tide of inspiration floods his soul and rains through his lips its overflow, he exults: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another, though my reins be consumed within me!"

There were two things, as we know, that took the Jews at the coming of Christ as by an agony of surprise. The first was that their long-promised Messiah should prove to be God incarnate, and crucified for the sins of men. Consequent upon that, and only less dreadful to them, was the admission of the Gentiles to all the privileges of the Hebrew Church. So repugnant was this to even the nearest companions of the Lord, that almost if not quite to the hour of his martyrdom Peter, for instance, could not come fully into the freedom of a gospel for all the world. Now, is it not a fact that the same is true to-day of the Christian Church toward the world outside Christendom? Not until of late are we coming to see that Christ may have had from creation, and all along, a relation to the heathen, a vast and saving work toward them, in and by their philosophies and religions as by their history in every other respect. Was it without the inspiration of the Son of God that Marcus Aurelius wrote: "There is one Universe, and one God who pervades all things, one substance, one law, one common reason, and one truth"? In the Yarjarbuda it is written: "The man who considers all things as existing in the Supreme Spirit, and the Supreme Spirit as pervading all beings, henceforth views no creature with contempt." It is Lucan who sings:

"Behold! around
All that thou seest does with God abound."

In one of the Hymns to Narayana we find:

"My soul absorb'd One only Being knows,
Of all perceptions one abundant source,

Whence every object every moment flows:
Suns hence derive their force,
Hence planets learn their course;
But suns and fading worlds I view no more:
God only I perceive; God only I adore."

And it is Saint Augustine who says:

"What is now called the Christian religion has existed among the ancients, and was not absent from the beginning of the human race until Christ came, from which time the true religion, which existed already, began to be called Christian."

When we read then of Balder, the pure god of the Northland, of the Virgin Vesta, we know from whom was the suggestion of these to the lewd heathen. We start with sudden surprise at this and that which seems Christlike in Brahma and Gautama of old. It amazes us that Confucius could have originated a system of morality in which is neither God nor Heaven. We wonder over Hussein, the Mohammedan saint, so like the Son of God; and of all that is good in Mohammed, as in Marcus Antoninus, Epictetus, Socrates, Plato, what is the explanation? Are the virtues of the ancient pagan world but "splendid sins," as said Augustine? The much that is noble, magnanimous, lovable and purely wise in all lands and languages, past and present, apart from and hostile to Christianity as to Judaism, to what shall we ascribe it? It is Christ, our Lord,—Priest and King toward these also, and in every age!

Books are heaped upon books to prove that Christianity is not original with the Christ, nor Judaism with the Jews. Most vigorously and laboriously is it at-

tempted to be shown that Tabernacle, Temple and Church, that priest, sacrifice, lustral water and solemn service, that every symbol, type and emblem, that every superhuman word of wisdom and love—all which crowns Revelation with peculiar grandeur and conquest—are but the repetition of something long before. It is asserted also that in Christ before Christ, as in many a Moses before Moses, all that is claimed to be divine is found.

Say that, in a sense, it is all so—what then? This Melchizedek, this "King of Righteousness and after that King of Salem, which is King of Peace," is "without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a Priest continually." Remember who said, "Before Abraham was, I am." "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made." He exists before all systems, all men. It is He who puts into all souls whatever of intuition, of natural wisdom and excellence, of divine inspiration, they possess. Wherever and whatsoever, whenever and whosoever it is, "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not." How broad, broad as all being, is the declaration, "*That was the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world!*"

He it is who is the eternal Word, the Revelation of God, whether inside or outside of Hebrew or Christian. "With Thee is the Fountain of Life, in Thy

Light shall we see Light!" The flame which flickers in the taper or glows in the long-imprisoned coal, which sparkles in the diamond or dazzles in the electric carbon,—is not all this light from the central sun? In a sense how much wider, deeper, stronger, more glorious than we have ever conceived before even of our Lord, is He who bars Abraham's returning steps as King and Priest! As well say that the sun rises and sets upon Jewry or upon Christendom only, as that He is less than the "light of the world!" "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons," said the fisherman of yesterday to Cornelius. "In every nation he that feareth Him," adds the astounded man, "and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him!" because He is, at last, the source of all that is true and good wherever it exists.

Neither society nor law were possible otherwise. It is He who puts into every soul whatever is there most like God. Were it not for this, there would be no craving for Christ as hunger craves food. Therefore it is that all lesser systems fade and perish, when the Son of Man draws near in the full and final revelation of himself in the Gospel!

It is because He is Priest and King to all the world without Revelation, also, that He sweeps beneath his sceptre and sacrifice

(V.) *All things, those also most hostile and repugnant.*

Moab is the offspring of the incestuous daughters of Lot; yet is Ruth, the Moabitess, made an ancestress of Christ; as is also Rahab, the harlot. That all sin will be fully punished, we well know. That every human

being is rigidly responsible according to his light and knowledge, no one denies. Yet even as the treachery of Judas was overruled—for it was essential to Redemption—so of everything, such as the Inquisition within the Church; so of every war, revolution, massacre, assassination also. No heathenism so dark and cruel, but is controlled by this great King to his own ends. The wrath of man praises Him, the remainder of wrath He restrains.

In Melchizedek the Son of God stands outside of the covenant people. Inside of them, He is rejected and slain. The magnitude of his nature bursts and breaks and shivers Judaism to shreds, as it is doing to every succeeding system. What flashes are there of the Priest and King outside of Judaism, when we see the yearning of Jesus toward publican and harlot, while the utmost power of the Jewish Church, the Pharisee, is the object of his highest horror! How does He turn again to the cry of the Syro-Phenician woman! And it is to a woman of Samaria He tells, first of all the race, that He is indeed the Messiah.

One class of men is to be branded forever as destitute of loving-kindness to a neighbor; another is to be immortalized for deeds of charity; and the first are Jews, the last is a Samaritan. Of the ten lepers healed, but one returns to give thanks—he who is a Samaritan. You cannot read a page of the New Testament and not see how He, who is also the Melchisedek of two thousand years before, is cramped, is suffocated within small Judea. He looks beyond Jordan, and the snowy summits of Lebanon cannot confine Him. "Neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem," He

says to a woman to whom no other Jew would have spoken, "shall men worship the Father." "The field is the world." "This Gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world."

Peter loves limitations, recoils terrified from a falling wall and an incoming world; but it is not so with Peter's Lord. His beautiful feet are planted upon the Mount of Olives, but his hands are stretched out, his heart goes abroad, his purposes sweep in the world, the universe, all time, all eternity! Wherever the old serpent glides, there is He who was manifested to destroy the works of the devil; never is the heel of the one far from the head of the other. And how frequent upon his lips are those wonderful words: "Many shall come from the East and West"—the old world and the new—"and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of Heaven." What conceivable limits are there to his eyes, his heart, his hands, when, extending these over the heads of his disciples grouped about him, He exclaims: "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold and one Shepherd."

During these last four thousand years since He gave of the bread and the wine to Abraham, the first of all communicants, has He, standing as then for a world to whom no direct revelation was to come, remained idle or apathetic? No! "My father worketh hitherto, and I work." Not a man has He made, but in some measure He has guided. The way to Emmaus has been forty centuries long. Very thoroughly have the

eyes of the heathen been held from knowing Him; yet in some way, in some measure, have they had his voice in their ears. Not for nothing has He been Priest to every soul He has made; not for nothing has He been, and is He, King of all. The Gospel will yet conquer the world to Him; but, meanwhile, whatever sense of sin and turning away therefrom there is in Beloochistan or Guinea, is of and from Him. Whatever African, drowning in the inky ocean of his ignorance, has grasped at the fetich of a chip or a straw—every least, dimmest yearning after God is from Him.

Nearly two hundred years before his birth the Almighty declares of his appointed servant, Cyrus by name, "He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure; even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid." Equally by Him it is that nobler things are done. It is by Him that Decimus devotes himself to the nine gods, and dies; that Regulus goes back to Carthage and to the revolving blades of steel; that Damon would die for Pythias; that Socrates cries aloud, "O that some messenger would come to us from the gods!" and that Plato bares his broad brow to the skies in agony of desire after the Supreme God. Who but Christ's is that word and wisdom of God which calls aloud: "Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom. I am understanding. By me kings reign, and princes decree justice. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. Rejoicing in the habitable part of the earth, and my delights were with the sons of men." Where there ever was word or deed of wisdom, justice, loving-kindness, self-sacrifice, there is Christ—King, Priest, universal Messiah!

Not without this Priest-King are, in a sense, all

(VI.) *Systems of religion; yes, all which have ever existed, or do exist.* No one acknowledges Christ as King of kings, but consents that all empires have their work and their day along the line traced out for them by His sceptre. Is it less so with the manifold religions of the earth? Reiterating the fact of personal responsibility in the end before the throne of this Man, ordained of God to be Judge, I hold that from the desperate endeavors after one Supreme Deity in the Eleusinian mysteries down to the devil-worship of the old Norsemen, all ritual and cultus originate with Him, so far as there is in them but one sincere sigh after Him as Maker and Friend. Do we ask why? Judaism has not been without its all-important mission to men these thirty-six hundred years. When it slew its Messiah, it slew its very soul; yet does its corpse linger still, held from disappearing in utter dust for some sufficient end. He who called Lazarus from the dead, after four days' burial, can summon even Judaism back to life, if He so wills.

You pass some huge stone cathedral upon Sunday, and wonder at the throngs of reverent men and women who pack its seats and aisles with kneeling thousands. Their Christianity is corrupt, but it confesses at least a divine Christ, and does a work toward its many millions which no other church can do for it, and no man knows what the Master means in and by it during the future. Is our Protestantism perfect? Yet it has had its indispensable work to do for the world.

Now, say the worst that can be said for the false religions,—have they not had their mission, also, to their myriads of millions? Confucius clamps great China into a system of iron observance, though it be without a God or a heaven. Did He who taught David and Isaiah, Moses and Daniel, Paul and John, have no whisper for the man who was to mould such masses, and for so long? Was it by the inspiration exclusively of Satan, that Buddhism makes into its own image the four hundred millions born into, dying from it, every generation? None other than Christ cries through the lips of Mohammed first, and through those of the minaret-crier since, "There is no God but God," when there are every generation one hundred and fifty millions to hear and believe. Strayed into the wilderness are some eight hundred and fifty millions in all, each thirty years, of men and women who have barely, if at all, heard the name of Jesus. It is impossible to think that the Good Shepherd has kept Himself within the Hebrew and Christian camp, and left them to wander uncared for among rock and bramble, among wolves and precipices.

(VII.) *Consider how impossible it is to rend Christ in two.* He who made all things must needs rule all things, must be a King. No one denies that He has always been King, always must be. If so, who dare rend his Lord in two? He is Priest also: you cannot separate in Him the one from the other. First King, then Priest; that is the Son of God. And wherever He is, with his crown as King goes his mitre as Priest; with the purple of empire, the flowing linen of sacrifice and

intercession; with his breastplate of steel, his breastplate gemmed with the twelve precious stones; with his sceptre and sword, there too must be his censer and his chalice brimmed with blood. To the world outside the Church also, if He is King there, who must be Priest? As King He subdues and rules over the outer world; as its High-Priest He makes atonement and intercession for it, as well as for the world within the Hebrew and then the Christian Church. Nebuchadnezzar was king over Babylon, equally so over the one hundred and nineteen conquered nations outside of Babylon; so is Christ King of his Church, and of the outlying provinces of heathendom—as He is of angels, devils, of all peopled worlds. The Jewish High-Priest was priest toward those who worshipped in the temple; equally so of those without the temple, in the court of the women, in the court—outside of that still—of the Gentiles. So is Christ Priest in and of his Church. Who dare say He is not Priest toward those myriads upon myriads who never enter, who have never heard of the church,—no, nor of Christ?

It is to teach men this, that our Lord showed Himself to uncircumcised Abram (not yet named Abraham) in the person of Melchizedek. Why have men ignored this theophany? We have ignored it just as, and because, we have stupidly ignored the whole race beyond the pale of the Church, Hebrew and Christian. The times of such ignorance God winked at. To-day all heathendom is arising around us, and, as from the dead, are forcing themselves upon our attention. As we stand bewildered, the seal is broken, the stone is rolled away, the watch is dispersed from the sepulchre of the

past; and lo! from his entombment, not of forty hours, but of nearly forty centuries, the Son of God, as King and Priest of the entire world, also rises from the dead. All these ages, and in ways we know little of, has He been preaching, yes, ruling as King, atoning and interceding as Priest for the souls in the prison dark and dead of heathendom.

We know He rules them as King; in what way does his death avail for these? Who can tell how He works through nature toward germinating wheat or unfolding rose? His sacrifice avails for the half of the human race which dies in infancy. Because we do not know precisely how, shall we therefore strike from the lives of innumerable myriads that life which gives to ours all it has of color and gladness, of purity and power and peace? Not more clearly than it has been taught, could it be taught us that "the soul that sinneth it shall die." No one knows but Christ, and no least hint or hope has He given of any additional probation after death, of any escape from eternal doom except by faith in Him. None the less, when the Greeks came about Christ as his cross drew near, He said: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." When He presents Himself to Abram, as Abram sets out upon his covenant journey down all ages, Christ foreruns and anticipates all Revelation of Scripture, Symbol, Temple, Ritual of Worship; and, as Priest of the Most High God, Possessor of heaven and earth, He stands for an uncovenanted Creator upon the one hand, for an unillumined heathenism upon the other; stands for nature, grand but godless.

When so long, long afterward, the star hovered over

Bethlehem, voices wailed through field and forest, glen and grove: "Great Pan is dead!" But Pan never lived. *He* was Pan, the All in all; nor had He rested idle all those ages. Confronting Abram in the dim and hazy dawn of the world, He looms large and awful in the yet imperfect day. But we see that He is King of Salem, of Peace: King of Peace, since He offers the Bread and Wine of his broken body and shed blood; for here is not Christ only, but Christ crucified, by whom alone the race without the Church or within the Church can be saved. He does this, holding then and there no relation to the Church; but that is enough, since his death is enough—enough!

When our Lord stoops to illustrate his love for us by that of a hen for its chickens, it may be allowable to find similar helps from purely human, often perverted, affection. In the Italian story, Francesca would not have loved Paoli if he had not been the messenger going before, and by whom she was wedded to, Paoli's brother. Nor would Guinevere have given her heart to Lancelot, had he not wooed her in behalf of King Arthur, not as yet seen. Now, is it not as if our Lord sought to be the first in the love of his covenant people, that before they have to do with Abraham, Jacob, Moses and the like, He makes himself the very Alpha of their devotion by coming in the earliest dawn of the Church, and with the blessing, the bread and the wine in his hands, making himself herein and literally the First as He will be the Last? And assuring Himself (mark that) of the Church by securing, as in Abram, the heart of the individual. It is the love of each for Him which is the love, in the end, of all.

It is a long way back to that monumental moment. The atmosphere of the ages between is thick with the breaths of men, with the smoke alike of hearthstones, of burning sacrifices, of brutal and bloody battles. Through it He towers aloft in outlines vast and vague. It is very little we know of his dealing as Priest and King, during these sixty centuries, in and with the heathen world. As we gaze, not knowing what to think, He calls to us across the vast interval, "It is I; be not afraid!" Our reply goes back, "Is it Thou, O Lord? Then are we not afraid."

II.

(B. C. 1898.—Gen. xviii.).

CHRIST THE PERSONAL FRIEND.

Picture to yourself the scene. Here is no city, town, village, hamlet. So far as is possible, the Chaldean Prince has been led by the hand of his Friend far off from the ways and walks of men, and back into the Eden of two thousand years before. The dwellings of this nomad are but rude tents made of the skins of goats and bullocks; and, little more than the foliage and flowers beneath and amid which lived Adam and Eve, the lifted curtains allow the breezes to sweep through from all sides. In every direction the undulating plains roll up into slopes and hills, which seem to flow with the fluent richness and depth of the grass into pastures; billowing up again into yet higher hills, which swell toward the north to the crests of great mountain ranges, glittering where the summits touch the sky with a snow which makes the azure by contrast of a darker blue. Here and there are groups of trees, native palms, olives, oaks, telling of the hidden streams which give them life; but nowhere is vineyard, or plowed field. No road or highway speaks of travel; no wall or fence, of the separated possessions of men. Almost as virgin as at creation, the unvexed soil yields the luxuriance of its herbage to the herds of oxen,

sheep and camels which graze by thousands, grouped under the care of herdsmen in this direction and in that, and as safe from exhausting their food as if it were instead the exuberance of the illimitable air.

The day deepens, as we look, into noon. The cooler breezes of the morning have slackened under the increasing heat, until at last the herds have disappeared, couched behind rock and hill and scattering trees. No voice is heard of bird, or low of cattle, or bleat of sheep, or call of keeper. All nature hushes itself, until with approaching night and the rising breeze, man and beast may loiter slowly toward the central encampment.

Seated in the door of his tent is the master and owner of all. He is an hundred years old, but it is not flowing beard nor whitened hair nor the consciousness of wealth and the almost worship of all around, which gives him an appearance so august. Twenty-five years before, he had been led out from Haran and the house of his ancestors into the world, as unbounded to him then as to-day are the reaches of the skies to us. Surer than is the trembling needle to the mariner, is the heart which obeys within him the hidden impulses of God; and yielding to them, he has always gone at each remove into fairer and yet fairer landscapes, richer and yet richer herbage for his cattle, until he has come to be the mightiest and most prospered of all men. Two years after leaving Haran, God, appearing to him we know not how, has again assured him that his children are to be more in number than the sands upon the seashore, than the stars which the Almighty points out to him in the midnight heavens. Not more numerous only; in and by these descendants the whole world is

to be blessed. Again is a son promised him, through whom all these things are to come to pass.

But the years fleet past, and no son is born. Appearing to him as king and priest, the Son of God gives him His blessing, gives him that bread and wine which is significant of so much: the promised son is not given him. Eight years after forsaking Haran, God had entered into a covenant with him by sacrifice of flesh and fowl, by the glare of a blazing furnace, following upon a horror of great darkness; and still the promise remains unfulfilled. With the dawn and dark of every day, with the coming and going of each season, abroad in the fields, lying awake in the stillness of midnight hours, sitting as now in the door of his tent, his one thought has been his promised son.

It is a ruinous mistake to fancy that this servant of God was unlike us. We have the record that after the birth of his son, as once before, he so far lost faith in God as to deceive, and compel his wife to aid him in deceiving, heathen kings as to her relationship to him, and severely is he shamed and punished on both occasions. We can easily believe, then, that there were times when like us, like David, he doubted as the years fled, whether the supreme assurance to him of God would be fulfilled. Doubtless in his despair, as the infirmities of age stole upon him, he too would groan, "Doth His promise fail forevermore?" Yet, as a rule, his faith survived the test. Who can say whether he has during all these years spoken to Sarah, to any one, concerning that promise upon which he leans as, next to the One who makes it, the joy and support of his declining life? The dealing with him of the Creator

of all, with him alone in all the earth, has lifted, has broadened this man, has given an unconscious majesty to his bearing. But infirmity is creeping on, and he sees his dimming eye, his whitening hair, his feebler step reflected in the increasing age and feebleness of Sarah. The long-listened-for cry of a babe is still unheard. Ten years, fifteen, twenty years pass, twenty-three! Meanwhile the childless wife waxes desperate, her forlorn condition made hopeless by her great age.

Yielding to her petulant entreaties, the patriarch takes to himself the bond-woman Hagar as a wife. Doubly exasperated by what follows, Sarah drives Hagar from the tent. She is met in the wilderness by the angel of the Lord and sent back. A son is born to Abraham. Does Judaism come before Christianity? Moses before Christ? There is the outflashing here of that amazing law of nature and of God, by which the abortive blossom must go before the fruitful; Cain must precede Abel, King Saul before King David, an apostle precipitated upon the world by impulsive Peter, who cannot wait for that chiefest of all the apostles to be sent of God in His own good time. Before Isaac is an Ishmael. But this is not he whom God had promised; whatever it may be to his wife, with whom God held no visible companionship, this does not turn him aside for an instant from the steadiness of his persistent waiting. There is a covenant between his Maker and himself. If the higher party has not as yet fulfilled even the first clause of the conditions of this contract, the man has done so; and he now receives, and his household with him, the seal in his flesh which closes and completes it so far as he is concerned.

God has said it! Upon this he stays himself, and calmly waits. It is this which gives an even nobler aspect to the patriarch. As all human probability, possibility even, of a son dies with the flying seasons, his trust in God increases; the less there is to him of himself, the more there is of his Maker. What had been impatience is passing from his brows; the lines, which had withered eye and lip in fretful skepticism under hope too long deferred, are dying from his face. God has said it!—the habitual thought is making him into meetness for heaven, is making him as into the august marble of an example to all men to the end of time. Unconsciously, and by a process which may be as true of us, he is taking toward his wondering household and from God the tones, the manner, the aspect of God toward himself, is being made into His image.

But a cluster of grapes does not as certainly ripen to mellow perfection, as does the man who keeps himself under the clear shining and summer of God. As he now sits in his tent door, he is aware of the coming to him through the air flickering with noonday heat, of three men. In the haste of his first salutation the Patriarch uses toward all three the same title of "lord," which, in the original, Sarah uses toward him. After he has had time to see who this third man is, who is yet more than man, he gives to Him, as is His due, the name "Lord," which in the Hebrew is "Jehovah." After the first greeting, he has eyes but for Him. In the flowing robes, in the general aspect of hair, beard, complexion, entire manner and bearing of Him, so evidently the chief of the three, there is nothing so unlike

that of other men of the time as to startle or astonish even the simplest herdsman, whom they may have passed as they neared the tents. None the less is there a stirring at the heart of the Patriarch, as of love toward one who is no stranger; and, left wholly to his own spontaneous feeling, he runs to meet, to welcome this wayfarer.

Not thus would his nephew Lot have visited him. Had the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah come to his encampment, or Abimelech, king of Gerar, with Phichol his captain, or the Hittite Ephron, from whom he afterward bought a burying-place; had any of the Chaldeans around journeyed to see the Prince highest in estimation of them all, it would have been with a retinue of servants and gaily caparisoned camels, doubtless with presents of gold and silver, cattle and slaves. Not so is it now. The three men arrive on foot, in the simplest guise, wholly unattended; yet is there that in their Leader which causes every other man to dwindle into nothingness.

By what slow processes the tremendous truth dawned upon Peter, John, James and the rest, two thousand years afterward, who can say? But they, too, had to know in the end who Jesus was. Upon Thomas it broke almost as suddenly as upon Saul on his way to Damascus. Before him stands the man with whom this disciple had been so closely associated all these years, whom he had seen dead and laid in the sepulchre. There He now stands, showing the wounds of which He had died. What an infinity of tears yet to be shed, of love unutterable wrings from the lips of Thomas, unconscious of it, the cry, "My Lord and my God!"

So it is not given us to know by what degrees, as of one wakening from sleep into a wider and ever wider awakening, the Patriarch comes, as he can bear it, to know that this august Stranger is indeed no stranger: that it is He who had led him from Haran; had over and yet over again told him of that son to be born, in whom all after-generations are to be blessed; He whom he habitually worshipped as the only living and true God.

Let us remember that—almost impossible as it is for us to conceive it—the slow beginning of the dawn in the east, the rising of the sun, the going abroad and the evening return of his flocks and herds, were not more gently natural and familiar to Abraham than was, before they parted, the fact of who his visitor was. In these days the attention of men is drawn as by roll of drums and blast of trumpets to wars and impending wars; to revolutions that are, and more tremendous revolutions that are to be. Most of all is our wonder challenged by the sudden outflashing of electric lights, the stealing to our ears of whispers beneath seas and around the globe: discovery and invention, following upon the heels of invention and discovery, until wonder itself wearies and wears out. In the simpler days of this Arab chief, there was nothing of this; the sole object which appealed to astonishment was God. And now the Prophet knows that the one who had led him from Haran, whom he loved, worshipped, rested upon, was even now seated in the person of a man like himself at the door of his tent. And that God should do this, itself made it right and the most natural thing in the world.

Nothing can be more simple than what followed. The Patriarch bows himself at the feet of his visitor. He entreats Him to tarry with His servant. He begs that a little water may be brought, wherein his sandalled feet, hot from the noonday travel, may be refreshed. Ages upon ages afterward this very Guest was to arise from supper, was to gird his loins with a towel, was to wash the feet of his wondering disciples, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded. Less loving and humble than He, the Patriarch merely sees to it that the washing is done by a servant, most likely by the hands of the visitor himself.

Abraham plays the zealous host yet further.

"I will fetch a morsel," he says, "and comfort ye your hearts." He is better than his promise. Hastening the preparation of the three measures of meal upon the hearth, he brings with it of the fatted calf, of the butter and milk—enormously too much of all—and notwithstanding his weight of years, he stands by his Friend while He eats. In the East, as everywhere and always, there can be no companionship without eating and drinking. Therefore did Christ continue it with his disciples, even after his resurrection. That they may know He is still their Friend and Brother as of old, He says when He comes among them, "Children, have ye here any meat?" and takes and eats before them of a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. So when his followers, exhausted by the fruitless fishing of the night, came ashore to this Friend waiting for them, knowing their need under the circumstances, with a more tender thoughtfulness than of a Mary or a Martha He had for them a fire kindled by the sea, fish

laid thereon and bread. In the most matter-of-course routine of the simplest friendship, can there be anything more simply loving than for Him to say to his yet terrified disciples as He there does, "Come and dine"? Nor does He engage them in loftier discourse, until their bodily exhaustion has been done away with by food.

Why follow the learned in their disputes as to whether the consumption of food by these celestial visitors was, or was not, as of fuel by fire? It is enough wonder as it is, to take the story as it reads; for as Abraham furnished vastly more than the morsel of bread he promised, so is the food which Christ gives. When He takes into his creative hands, though it be but a barley loaf or two and a few small fishes, there is more than enough for the feeding of many thousands.

Of all the miracles of our Lord, this is the only one which is duplicated. Repetition means emphasis. "Simon, Simon!" "Saul, Saul!" He exclaims, where He would arrest special attention. Sometimes it is "Verily, verily!" Surely the twofold feeding of the multitudes is intended to arrest and fix, as it were, a stress of consideration upon that which is the climax of his meaning in his eating with his friends at any time. It all leads up to this: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." That was the food upon which every hunger must depend—the body of Christ broken, his blood shed upon the cross. Therefore was it set forth in the bread and wine of that first Theophany, which was intended to be the

summing up in advance and epitome of them all. Thus, when Abraham presents food to his guests, at the heart of the fellowship is there a prophecy of an often eating of the Lord's Supper, a prophecy and promise of such eating and drinking together with Him in his kingdom hereafter as we can now have little idea of.

Who can doubt that from the first coming of his guest, the one thought of the Patriarch had been of the long-promised Son. There is no hint that, during his more than a score of years of waiting, he had once drawn nigh to God in urgent asking for the fulfilment of the promise, although his must have been a daily, almost hourly, worship of God. Nor does he open his lips for that now. He had patiently abided the pleasure of Him, who unsolicited had given the assurance. Let Him make it good when He saw fit. Abraham could wait, if God so willed it, many a score of years yet, and forever. And now to the aged wife, listening within the tent, there comes unrequested the assurance of the son to be born within the year—for, and to the last, the faith of Abraham had survived the test!

Within a year a son is to be born! Little wonder is it that Sarah laughs. Was it in the bitterness of her scornful unbelief that such a thing should befall her now? Or was it the irrepressible gladness of one to whom is granted at last the fruition of hope so long deferred? To wife, to husband, not their Creator Himself could do for them more than this! Did ever dinner have such dessert?

Is there no touch, as of a love beyond that of a woman, in this: that, having to announce to the Patriarch

the doom of the cities of the plain and having to hear his supplications therefor, his guest should first gladden the soul of his friend with this assurance? Without undue selfishness on his part, surely there must have dwelt in the heart of the Patriarch, during all that came after, this thought: "What though these neighboring plains and cities be swept by floods of consuming fire? Our household, the perpetuation of that household down all ages, is assured; though the world perish in flame, as once in water, in my unborn son and in his seed shall all the earth—restored, perhaps, for the purpose—be blessed!"

Now every shadow of doubt is gone. He who can Himself take flesh, can cause the long-promised son to take flesh also. With the gladness at this, there comes to Abraham a new affection toward his long-estranged nephew; with the fulness of his heart, there is an overflow of at least pity toward even the wicked inhabitants of the plains! Encouraged by this new token of his standing with God, surely the intercessor pleads as he could not otherwise have done. He had shown all energy before in rallying his army of servants, in pursuing the kings who had carried off Lot and the rest captive. Here is a deadlier foe, one who is sternly just, but one who has given such evidence, too, of His tenderest pity and love, that Abraham puts forth as much of the energy of faith which obtains promises, as that which waxes valiant in fight and puts to flight the armies of the aliens.

It is impossible for the narrative to have made it clearer than it has, that the visitor of the Patriarch is man. He is seen as such, is conversed with as such,

eats and drinks, walks, and every way acts as such. The one visited is as certain of the manhood of the other as he is of that of Lot, of his steward Eliezer, of himself. From the outset it is clearly recorded, that this same person is God. He assumes all along, that He it is who has had all the relations hitherto of the Almighty to Abraham, and now to the wicked cities, to the race. Because this is none other than Christ Jesus our Lord, anticipating by these two thousand years his appearance to men in Judea, are we individually interested in the story. Passing beyond that, Christ here anticipates Him who shall destroy Jerusalem by the agency of that living storm, the Roman army; anticipates that terrible revelation of Himself, before which the world shall sink in ashes at the last day.

Doubtless with reference to this very interview with the father of the faithful, Jesus said to the Jews: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it and was glad." It is small wonder that the astonished and exasperated multitude said: "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" "Verily, verily," Jesus made answer to them, "before Abraham was, I am." In all Scripture, in all the pages of profane history, is there, can there be, anything more evident than that He who appeared to the Patriarch is "Jesus Christ, yesterday, to-day, and forever the same!"

"Not yet fifty years old!" and this is the one solitary hint, in Old Testament as in New, as to the personal appearance of Christ. To infinite and unchangeable perfection there can be neither the weakness of infancy nor of old age. Seven hundred years before Jesus is

born, God, by the prophet, assures Bethlehem that out of it "shall He come forth to me that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting"; yet of Him it is said, "Thou hast the dew of thy youth!" Even although the fountains of a renewed youth were already welling up in the century-old Patriarch in virtue of companionship as close as his with this Fountain of Life, the man must have seemed older than the eternal Jehovah beside whom he walked, as they went toward Sodom. He who gave the first fathers of the world nearly a thousand years of life, could have made even our life here unending. He who made the Patriarch so young again can give us, companioning with Him, that freshness and vigor to advanced years, which men ascribe to genius. Even in this world, how do we turn back with rueful yearning to our earlier days—

"When I was young, ah, woful when!"

Youth! fresh, joyous, beautiful, expectant youth! But the youth we have had is not that to which we should turn. It lies before us! Next to the possession there of God, it is the being eternally young which makes the happiness of heaven; and Swedenborg dreamed well when he said, that it is the oldest of the angels there who seemed to be the youngest.

In the Theophany following upon this, we shall endeavor to enter with Jacob into that rapture of private personal prayer to Christ, which was as true of Abraham now as of Jacob by Jabbok then. Leaving that for the present, there is something here recorded which is very striking. It is the exceeding closeness as of personal

examination, which Christ represents Himself as giving to the cities of the plain. "Because," the Son of God says to His friend as they walk, "the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous, I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know."

No need to say that God always and everywhere knows everything. As He addresses Himself in a human body to our eyes, so in such words as these does He make his meaning plain to our ear. The closest, most impartial, most accurate investigation, in the instance of every man and always—that is what is meant. We lift this man and that to heaven, consign the other to hell, upon how superficial a knowledge of his inmost self! How *can* we decide? Every man is so much the result of things in which he had, necessarily, no hand—birth, hereditary traits, education, example, companionship, force of this temperament or that, stress of temptation, circumstances—that who can decide how much is the naked, thoroughly responsible man, and how much is as apart from him as the broadcloth or the rags, the jewels or the chains he wears? This good man lives and suffers and dies under a cloud, whose lightnings never intermit. That bad man is charioted in splendor through every street in Babylon—yea, sits upon the summits of the globe—while God and man seem conspiring to grant him every desire, even till he is escorted with gorgeous funeral rites to the grave.

Well, what then? Science constructs a scale so finely adjusted, that it turns at the falling upon it of a sun-

beam. More accurately than that, will this Man, appointed Judge by his Father, take to pieces, analyze as with microscopic eyes, and weigh out to an invisible atom everything concerning each. Only rest in Him for that, and how sweet the rest! The Patriarch trusted in his Friend for that too, where Sodom and Gomorrah were concerned. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth," he demanded of Him, "do right?"

When a school-girl says of her mate, "Yes, I love her dearly and tell her all my secrets," she unconsciously reveals that which is the soul and cement of the closest friendships, and between the noblest of earth. As every friendship is but the pale shadow of that between Christ and his disciple, how natural is it when one of these exults, "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets." Therefore is it that, as the Patriarch and his visitor walk together toward the doomed city, the latter says, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do, for I know him?" Tested and found true, the Almighty rests upon the fact that the Patriarch "will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment: that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him." This divine friendship is the love of a man for a God who is infinitely reliable in every sense, of God for the man upon whom He too can surely count. Leaving purely animal-like instincts out of consideration, love is, in other words, according to the quality of the one loved—the nobler the excellence, the more vigorous the affection; and therein is the rapture and permanence of

those friendships which, begun perhaps on earth, are the clasping to its bosom of perfected excellence by excellence made perfect forever.

"The disciple whom Jesus loved!" Yes, there are grades of loving, because there are grades of lovableness. Peter, James, and John are more to Christ than the other apostles; and of these three, who are always taken by Him when the chief of his wonders are to be seen and done, John is he who alone leans his head upon the very bosom of Jesus. As evident as that Mary was more to Christ than Martha, so is it that there were those of Old Testament ages whom He preferred to all living up to that date. "Though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it," He says, and repeats it, of a doomed land, "they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God"; and here again, as always, the measure of excellence is the standard of preference. For the reason that Lot lives in Sodom, and because he did not train his children aright, as the narrative but too plainly tells, it is not to Lot that He bends his steps, of whom it is said: "Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness; *therefore* God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." Not to Lot, except by an angel, and barely in time for the man to save himself, does Christ make known His purpose. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will show them his covenant"—this last, long before. The doom of Sodom is the secret, undreamed of by any, which He now tells His friend, walking beside Him.

It always has been, always will be so. Who knew of the deluge impending, though in cloudless skies,

but Noah? Who can tell of the coming famine, but Joseph? Who knows the disastrous result of their voyage as they unfurl sails in the favoring breeze, but Paul? and who but he, while the ship is in act of being whelmed, can encourage his comrades with the assurance that "not a hair should fall from the head" of any of them?—the same Friend having been with him to tell him so on the tossing bark, as now stands beside the Patriarch so many ages before. Babylon is the wonder of the world for its wise men; but only Daniel, to whom Christ has told it, can see with steady eye through all events and empires to the end of history, as he had through the dreams of the king. Even as the Messiah had told Moses the meaning of the Tabernacle, and every rite thereof to be fulfilled in Himself, so had He whispered to every prophet a secret something concerning Himself, not to come to pass for ages. Thus, while walking with his disciples, Jesus tells them in advance the whole story of his arrest, crucifixion, and resurrection; yea, of the doom of Jerusalem half a century after that, the fiery doom of the world, the judgment, and the eternal destinies of righteous and wicked forever.

So of lesser things. "There is beyond the unsailed seas," is the haunting whisper in the ears of the Christian Columbus, "a New World. Go plant my cross upon its shores!" And why is it that absolutely all penetration into nature and its hitherto unknown laws, all marvellous discovery and wondrous invention, is in the lands lying nearest the Son of God?

Therefore can we smile at the wild conjectures of unbelieving men as to the future of the nations. Amid

plot and counterplot, the marshalling this way and that of armies in open day, and the stealthy coming together of deadlier Socialist, Nihilist, Red Republican by night; whether there be the roar of cannon or the explosion of dynamite; the current hither and thither of emigration, or the stagnation of unlooked-for financial disaster; the zealous education of the children, or the corroding of an infernal corruption,—we have been told, in outline at least, what is to be, and can wait the second coming of our Lord. So of the furious speculations of men as to evolution, the supremacy of natural law, the origin of life—our Friend has whispered to us enough to permit our listening to all the wrangle, as those who know.

Do we live after death? Is there a God? If there be spirits, can and do they communicate with us? He who knows everything has so told us everything that we have only pity for those who debate such things, as a statesman in the secrets of his sovereign, who chances to hear the babble of pot-house politicians. Not even the feeblest and most nervous of women can take fright at the grisly tales, at the seeming apparition, of ghosts. "My Lord," she laughs, "has been to and fro between the other life and this too often not to know the afterworld as a man does his yards and lawns, and I rest in what He has said about it and in Him." "He to whom the Word hath spoken," says à Kempis, "is forever freed from clash of conflicting opinions." So of our own private and most personal affairs: "I call you not servants," our Lord says to us, "for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known to you,"—the ordering toward each

one of us of everything (who cares for the details?) during life, and after that our Friend himself and heaven forever!

But that this Friend of Abraham and of ours should "rain upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven"; and that it was He who "overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground,"—how can we make it satisfactory to ourselves that our Friend can do *that?* He weeps over Jerusalem; yet Titus, standing perhaps upon that very Mount of Olives forty years later, and beholding the awful scene—eleven hundred thousand Jews wrapped with their temple and city in fire—lifts his hands to the skies, calling God to witness that he is but His agent in all this. So of the ten thousand things which appall us, and so of what follows in the worlds to come, there is, there can be, but one solution.

For my part, as I stand early the next morning with the Patriarch and gaze, and "lo the smoke of the country goes up as the smoke of a furnace," I stay myself upon my Friend and am silent. Only let me know, as Abraham did, that this Friend is the Maker of all, who knows all, whose power is forever but the agent of His wisdom, His justice, His love,—and I can wait. Yes, and let me know (as the Chaldean Prince did not know) that this God takes flesh to be himself made sin for us, himself to endure the utmost that civil law, church law, mob law can inflict, his Father adding thereto the infinite agony of his wrath upon his Son dying beneath it for us—let me know but that, and with eyes that see Him and Him only, with hands that

cling to Him and to Him alone, with a heart that loves and rests in Him not more utterly than an intellect which finds its every demand more than satisfied in Him—let me but look up to Him and Him only, and hear Him say, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter,"—I believe and wait! No archangel even could conceive such an explanation of everything going before as is His birth as a babe in a manger, His death for us upon Calvary; and He who did and was all this, so undreamed of by any, has that in the future, and in explanation of everything, "exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think!"

In one word, Christianity is personal friendship with Christ. He was visible to the Patriarch but an hour or two; since then He has made his home with us for over the average life of a man, with all the wonder of love included therein; how then should our belief and our love be, like our knowledge of Him, greater than that of Abraham! For Him—

"*whom not having seen we love, in whom though now we see Him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls!*"

III.

(B. C. 1739.—Gen. xxxii.)

CHRIST COMPELLED BY PRAYER.

If ever there was an instance in which the mother is the maker of the man, this is that instance. If ever it was essential to a man, that one yet nearer and better to him should come and abide between him and his mother, that man is Jacob. To get a firm grasp upon the vitals of this most interesting matter, let us run rapidly over its outer incidents.

When Abraham is one hundred and sixty years old, and Isaac sixty, there is born to the latter—married twenty years before to Rebekah—twin sons, Esau and Jacob. When Abraham has been dead sixty-two years, and Isaac is one hundred and thirty-seven years old, there is war between these brothers. As a rule, where a mother loves one of her sons more than another, it would have been womanlike for Rebekah to have given her preference to such a son as Esau. That she loves Jacob most, and has, it would seem, almost a horror of Esau, is because Jacob abides with her among the tents and the flocks, while Esau is a wild Arab, finding his happiness, partly by reason of the aversion of his mother, far from home and in hunting. In keeping with this, is her absolute control over Jacob. As both effect and cause of that,

is the strong likeness between this most energetic and deceitful woman and her favorite son—a likeness which repeats itself long afterward in Agrippina and Nero, in Catharine de Medici and Charles IX. of France.

Living closely at home Jacob learns, as the roving Esau does not, and from both father and mother, the mysterious but unspeakable blessing which is to flow down all ages from Abraham in the line of the first-born. One day, when the brothers are thirty-three years old, Esau staggers into the encampment exhausted from unsuccessful hunting; and his shrewd brother buys of him, ignorant of its priceless value, and with a mess of pottage, the coveted birthright; Esau rashly sealing the absurd sale with the hasty oath of the rough and hairy savage he is. Forty-four years roll by; and it is easy to see that although Jacob is now seventy-seven years old, he is as subservient to his masterful mother, nearly a century old, as a boy of ten. Hardly hesitating an instant, he yields to her suggestion; and her own hands prepare this time the mess of savory food for Isaac, wherewith, for a moment's gratification of appetite, an eternity of blessing upon the first-born is misplaced. When Esau learns how he has been for the second time deceived and defrauded, he weeps aloud—like the impulsive and red Indian of the plain and forest he has yet more thoroughly become,—while Isaac, aged and blind, trembles at the dreadful error into which he has been duped.

In his wrath, Esau swears to slay his brother when the old man shall have died; and Jacob, as docile as ever to the strong woman who has made him what he is, flies from his father's house. The reckless woman

had taken upon her own head the curse which her weaker son had feared; and the curse begins to work upon her, in the absence of the one being she loved, in the companionship till death of the husband she has deluded, and the son whose every glance must have been as the stab of an outraged Orestes. And thus it is that Jacob, compelled to lose all for the time where he had hoped to grasp everything, forced to change places with Esau and give up his home for the wilderness, lies down to rest on the first night of his flight, his head upon a stone, and then and there comes to him his wonderful vision.

How—let us halt for a moment to ask—can a holy God submit himself to the treacherous courses of a man like this? Two most amazing things are involved herein. First, why and how is it that God should not only permit, but should adopt toward the working out of his purest purposes, deeds of the blackest dye? There is no need to specify the murder of Abel, when it is equally true of every murder; the drunkenness of Noah, when it is equally so of every vice; the lust of Potiphar's wife, when it is the same with every sin. Down the long catalogue of evil deeds till the blackest of all is wrought in the crucifixion of Christ, from the beginning to the end of time, the Almighty leaves every man to his freedom of doing, overruling things evil as well as things good to the same glorious result.

So of men and women, the worst as the best. Moab is the incestuous offspring of Lot and his daughter; yet the Moabitess Ruth is, like the harlot Rahab, a lineal ancestress of Christ. In a sense, not John nor Paul himself did that which led more directly to the salva-

tion of the world than Judas. Gabriel is not, perhaps, as efficient toward the purposes of heaven as Satan. It is enough for us to know that there is a divine and all-powerful chemistry of persons, as of events, which brings about in the end the kingdom of God; leaving every one to his freedom, and to his fair trial at the close, with all following upon that. Though Jacob deceives, though Moses gives way to passion, and Aaron plays the coward; though Eli is the weakest of fathers, and David yields to his lust; through the vilest wickedness of the worst, and the weakest wickedness of the best, God remains,—all the more conspicuously for the blackness of devils and the imperfections of even angels,—transcendently holy, even as He is victoriously able to overrule all things to His own glory and our highest welfare in Christ.

Let us rid ourselves of the idea of a ladder reaching from the sleeping Jacob to the skies. Martin's magnificent painting is a better interpretation of the Hebrew, when he represents the ascent as by a vast stairway extending from the remotest horizon upon the one side to the farthest horizon upon the other, while up and down the broad steps ascend and descend by radiant armies the angels of God. For the sake of Him who is afterward to grasp and be grasped in actual struggle in which is no dreaming, let us listen when that same Being now says to the slumbering man: "I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac, and behold I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, for I will not leave thee." It is but natural that on waking Jacob exclaims, "How dreadful is this place! This is

none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!" How true is the narrative to the shrewd and selfish man, when he strikes on the spot a bargain with God: "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God, and of all that Thou shall give me I will surely give the tenth unto Thee." "Unto Thee"; that is, unto Him of whom he exclaims in the first breath of waking, "Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not!" And Christ, "yesterday, to-day, and forever the same," patiently allows Jacob to be Jacob still; even as He afterward bore with the self-seeking of John and James, the skepticism of Thomas, the blundering impulsiveness of Peter,—yea, even with the pitiful weakness of you and me, and all of us. He who is to change this "vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body," has the purpose, "according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things to Himself," to make even our inmost and meanest self,—meaner, surely, than anything visible to us and others in our bodies,—such that He will see of the travail of His soul in us and be satisfied.

Run yet more rapidly over what comes after. Jacob is received by Laban, who proves to be indeed his mother's brother by the strong family likeness of a shrewd and lying treachery, by which Jacob begins to suffer that punishment in kind which he had so richly earned. It is but the first instalment, when Laban palms off upon him Leah for Rachel. As he proved traitor to his aged father, so in his own helpless age is

he deceived by his sons. Even as his mother had made a favorite of him, so does he make a favorite of Joseph; and during the forty years of his weeping for his slaughtered son (as he is deluded into believing him to be), he is paid back tear for tear, pang for pang, in kind and with compound interest, for all he had inflicted upon his own father. He tells Pharaoh how few and evil have been the days of the years of his life; does it occur to him how righteously he has earned that evil?

True to his character, Jacob dupes Laban, until into his hands have passed the herds of his equally deceptive father-in-law. The mother is still strong in the man of a hundred and nine years of age, when with cautious pre-arrangement he steals away from Laban, is pursued, is overtaken. The hereditary deceptiveness is seen in the wife of Jacob, when having stolen her father's gods she conceals them under the cushions upon which she sits, and outwits him, searching for his pitiful deities, with a lie. Rescued from Laban by the intervention of his heavenly Friend, the Patriarch has now to confront as he may the wrath of his defrauded brother.

Let us note here, and in closest connection with that which is the soul of the story, how that the man who of all men prayed with fervor the most agonizing, is the very man who is most thoughtful and energetic in the use of means, of all conceivable means. First, he sends messengers to conciliate Esau. In vain are his humble approaches. Like a spear hurled from the hand of the enraged brother, the sole reply is that he is riding down upon Jacob at the head of four hundred

men. What that means, the Patriarch understands but too well. He knows—none so well—the implacable wrath of a man whose life has been given to the wilderness and to the slaying of wild beasts. No man can estimate more accurately than Jacob, how precious in the eyes of Esau must be the vast flocks and herds, slaves, silver and gold of Isaac, which for these nearly forty years Esau has held in undisputed possession,—his fugitive brother in all probability slain long ago by the God he had offended. Doubtless Esau must have come by this time to comprehend, too, in some degree what is meant by the birthright to those mysterious and covenanted blessings, the contract for the bestowal of which in the line of the eldest born the Almighty had come down from the skies to enter into, stamping the seal of the same into the flesh of the descendants of Abraham. That he does not understand wherein apart from the possession of the vast family wealth it consists, makes it all the more valuable in the eyes of Esau. Moreover, he has bound himself by an oath.

Isaac is not to die for twenty-three years yet, outliving his deception by Rebekah and Jacob some forty-four years. What a mark it is of the displeasure of Heaven, that while the place and date of Rachel's death are given, Rebekah drops with the flight of Jacob from the narrative, and is heard of no more. Well does the trembling Jacob understand that Esau sweeps down upon him to slay him and his sons, while as far away as possible from the tents and knowledge of Isaac; and none as well as he comprehends what a temptation to Esau must be the flocks and herds, the silver and the slaves of thrifty years, the fruits of which he has himself re-

ported to Esau by the first messengers he has sent,—"oxen and asses, flocks, and men-servants and women-servants." For Esau to give up what he has so long possessed for such a man, not to seize upon that which is the spoil of his sworn and righteous wrath, Jacob despairs of that!

He redoubles his efforts to conciliate his brother, or to elude him in part, if that is impossible. First he divides his household and herds into two bands; into that upon which the swiftly descending storm is first to strike, he groups Leah, his least loved wife, and his concubine handmaidens and their children; following upon these come Rachel, his best beloved, and Joseph, his favorite son; and all are zealously instructed to prostrate themselves to the earth before the wild rider and his horde of followers, hungry as wolves for the spoil. Next, he falls to his prayer. "O God of my father Abraham," he cries, "and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which saidest unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee; I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which Thou hast showed unto Thy servant: for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray Thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children!" "And," (how the thrift as of bargain breaks through), "Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude!"

But do! *do!*—is there not something else he can do?

Yes, in great haste, hard against the grain as it must have been, he tells off "two hundred she goats, and twenty he goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, thirty milch camels with their colts, forty kine and ten bulls, twenty she asses and ten foals" into five droves, an interval between, to halt Esau as so many successive tributes from the hand of a servant to his lord—not gifts as from brother to brother. Even then it is but a "peradventure he will accept me." It was an energetic thing for him to do, when Jacob struck out from his father's tents, and alone, across the wilderness, staff only in hand. For some thirty years has he worked hard, no man harder. "In the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night." Now, old as he is, he uses, with the same energy, every means he can think of. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," says Christ. And if you run over the roll of those who have lived nearest to God, it is also the muster of those who, relying seemingly least upon God, have wrought as if by their own brain and heart and hands, and by these alone, everything was to be done.

Having used every means, Jacob appears to have lain down with his household. But he cannot sleep, and, rising again, he sends his sons and wives over the ford Jabbok, and remains alone for one last despairing effort with God. It is astonishing—but, in every instance, the man who prevails in prayer is the man who is alone, as he prays, with God. Abraham leaves Sarah behind, when he pleads with Him for Sodom; and if he fails, it is because he ceases to ask before God ceases to grant. Moses is by himself, beside the bush in the wilderness. Joshua is alone when, as we shall

see, Christ comes to him as an armed man. Gideon and Jephthah are by themselves when commissioned to save Israel. Once does Elijah raise a child from the dead, and Elisha does the same; and in each case not even the mothers come in while the prophet, alone with God, asks and receives. So of Ezekiel, of Daniel.

Although others are present, Saul journeying to Damascus is alone with Christ after that He breaks upon him. Cornelius is praying by himself when the angel flashes upon his solitude; nor is any one with Peter upon the housetop, when he is prepared to go to the Gentiles for the first time. One John is alone in the wilderness; another John is by himself in Patmos, when nearest God. It is when alone under his fig-tree in prayer, that Jesus sees Nathanael. All religious biography, our own closest communion and success with God, show what Christ means when, as if it were the only way to pray, He says: "Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet; and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father, which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

And now, behold the inmost working of private, prevailing prayer! The One who appears to the Patriarch is a man; the entire story is to that effect—words can not express it more clearly. That this man is also God is recorded as distinctly. "Thou hast power with God," the visitor says, "and hast prevailed." From his birth, Jacob had heard that no man can see God and live; yet here is that Son of God, himself God, of whom he says: "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." And therefore does he name the place "Peniel"—that is, "the face of God."

Is it possible to make it plainer that this is none other than Jesus Christ—God manifest in the flesh? More than a thousand years after, and still some seven hundred and twenty-five years before the birth in Bethlehem, the prophet says of this event: "He had power over the angel, and prevailed; he wept, and made supplication unto Him; he found Him in Bethel, and there He spake with us; even the Lord God of hosts; the Lord is his memorial"; and then the application to us of this: "Therefore turn thou to thy God; keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually." Can language be plainer? The Patriarch, at least, has no difficulty as to who this visitor is. "God Almighty appeared unto me," he says to Joseph, fifty years afterward; and he further characterizes Him as "God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk; the God which fed me all my life long unto this day; the angel which redeemed me from all evil."

It is an incidental proof of the loving reverence of the disciples for Jesus, that after his resurrection when they see Him standing in the early dawn upon the shore of the lake, in which they have fished all night in vain, even in the act of hurling himself overboard, tired as he is, not even impulsive Peter forgets to cast his fisherman's coat about his nakedness before he swims those three hundred feet to Christ. So we read of the Lord as laying His hand to heal upon this person and that, and of being timidly touched by the afflicted woman; yet is there no other contact, however reverent, of any disciple and his master. This it is which makes more desperate, upon the part of Jacob, what now follows.

How natural, simple it is! To Jacob, as he is engaged in his entreaty for deliverance from Esau, comes the Son of God. In the great earnestness of his supplication, Jacob lays hold upon Him. Still is there silence, if not repulse. The agonizing man must have had some conception that in his case hangs in peril that covenant of God with Abraham, in virtue of which all nations are to be blessed in him. May there not have been something of the agony of Christ, so long after in Gethsemane, and as for the endangered Race, which lifts this herdsman into such violence of entreaty as causes him to wind his sinewy arms about the knees of Him who seems to be breaking from him? There is a wrestle for the mastery. Were it not for the inspired record, who dare conceive such a thing? But the struggle continues until the breaking of the day; nor is Omnipotence equal to such importunate strength. The visitor touches the hollow of the thigh of his loving adversary, and it is out of joint. Here, as physicians tell us, is at once extreme agony, and an utter powerlessness. The Patriarch can no longer stand upon the ground. What cares he? His heart, his arms are stronger than ever; and, linking them now about the neck and bosom of the other, the suppliant deserts the soil and hangs his entire weight upon his God!

"Let me go!" Omnipotence itself has now to entreat in its turn, "for the day breaketh." From the resolute lips of Jacob comes the calm resolve of conscious might, "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me." "And He said, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And He said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; for as a Prince hast thou

power with God and with man, and hast prevailed." What power is this which can lift this poor, chaffering, cheating wretch to such a height! Surely the altitudes of the universe suffice not to set forth from what depths, to what summits God can lift the man who but clings to Him!

How very much more do we know of this Visitor than did Jacob! Whatever those learned, who had Him as companion during the seven Theophanies which came after this, is ours also. All that men came to know of Christ during His life and death, ages after on earth, is our own. Imagine our importunity to have increased up to the measure of our information! Though our Esau is Satan, and with all hell at his heels, what need we fear, having such an interlocked grasp upon our Lord!

We read of how a king or emperor knights upon some well-fought field some valiant soldier, the nobility of whose new title is borne by his rejoicing children to the end of time. So is it here; the distinctive name of the people of God, till at least prayer shall perish, is "the Israel of God." "An Israelite indeed," said Jesus of Nathanael, since beneath the fig-tree He had Himself been wrestled with by the man in prayer—Nathanael, like Jacob, being permitted so soon afterward to see the face of this divine Foe—Jesus, the Christ.

And Jacob is blessed of the Son of God. But, now as ever, not one syllable does Christ say as to how, and when, and where, the suppliant—in this case Jacob—shall be rescued from his Esau. The Patriarch knows, as he advances next day alone, and at the forefront of

his household, nothing but that God is with him; and to Him he leaves it all. None the less he still uses all possible means, bowing himself seven times before the savage Sheik, who, with his four hundred spears at his back, bears down upon him. Here is no interposition of God! Esau rides down upon his traitorous brother with levelled spear, his vengeance whetted by the sight of his enemy, his lust for plunder by the swarming herds and slaves in full view. There is no faltering in a purpose which, during near half a hundred years, has hardened into steel. With eye and weapon unswerving, Esau rushes down upon Jacob. A moment more, and the unarmed man will lie weltering in his blood—his wives and sons, his flocks and herds, given over to slaughter, outrage, and spoil.

In that instant Esau is struck through the heart! But it is by an arrow peculiar to the quiver and bow of Him of whom it is written: "Thine arrows are sharp in the hearts of the King's enemies, whereby the people are subdued under Thee!" For it is an arrow of conquering love! Saul, the persecutor, fell transfixed by it when in full career, and so is it now. "And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him; and they wept."

There is a vast deal said these days of Evolution, and of the evolution of man from the lowest germs toward—who knows what grandeur of development? As if this had not been taught in Scripture from the beginning! For Scripture is not more a revelation of who and what God is, than it is a revelation of who and what man is, and was, and may be. For the entire theory and practice of Christianity is the evolution, de-

velopment of man along the loftiest lines of his nature into a final likeness of that Son of God who is himself "the Brightness of the Father's glory, and the express Image of His Person." "Until we come unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ"—not a child in the Sunday-school but knows that!

Evolve? Develop? Yet more practically, How? Say, you are feeble of frame; try wrestling with an athlete, and how soon do you develop arms and chest, sinews, muscles, lungs! Say, you are weak of intellect; try day by day to put yourself against some powerful mind, and see as you argue, reason, strive for mastery, how you unfold the powers of your intellect. Say, you are cold and small and sluggish of heart; try, beginning with but a feeble affection for some larger and more loving nature, to love back his or her love, and you too will expand your own powers of loving. Now here is this Son of God, unlimited in his nature as God; unlimited in the scope and sweep of his atoning sacrifices to all who will avail themselves of it; unlimited in his Promise to all who will come and ask; unlimited in this, that when visible on earth He never rejected nor refused the request of one—no, not of one—man, woman, or child who came or was brought to Him, or whatever was the want. Do we begin to understand?

This unbounded Being draws so near in Christ, God yet Man, that He is of all men we know the nearest. Strange! He is here, so to speak, to be wrestled with, of body, mind, heart. He sees to it that we have personal trouble enough to pray against. The salvation of the race is devolved upon every man and woman of us, and that is reason enough for us to go to Him to

bend Him to our success. Yes, the Son of God—dare I say it?—presents Himself to us too, broad of chest, strong of arms, eternally young, waiting to be conquered in prayer into the giving of His unbounded abundance.

"The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Jacob saw a ladder reaching from where he lay to heaven, up and down which trooped the angels: he is afterward to learn that this is as a scaling ladder planted upon the soil, its top against the ramparts of heaven, and by which he and we must storm heaven itself or do without. If you who read have never known of the almost infinite stringency of the world upon you, and at every step; if you have not gone to God and prayed and prayed, and prayed only apparently to be repulsed,—yes, and seemingly cruelly repulsed, and often,—you have no business with this page. It is to such as have known, long known, the agony of prayer long despised, rejected, refused, these lines are addressed. For it is not "the kingdom," it is the King of heaven who "suffereth violence," who must be taken by force. Our want is but the temporary inducement to that which is the supreme thing; and that is our so wrestling in prevailing prayer with the Son of God, as to expand and develop our whole nature into likeness to His. Thus are we "made partakers of the Divine Nature"; thus are we, in the end, "filled with all the fulness of God."

It is in lands which know of and deal with the Son of God, that men,—and women to match them, too,—have grown in stature and breadth and force beyond

all that men and women ever were before. Does any one know what we may come to be even in this world, and in the lesser things of mere bodily, intellectual, affectional diameter? Imagine us to have some idea of what one may get of things spiritual in prayer to God, to the absolutely unlimited God. "No man cometh unto the Father but by me," says Christ—here for the sole object of being wrestled with for what He has to give. By the mercies of God, then, in view of the savage and sworn Esau pressing down upon us, in view of all we may yet be and do for God, for ourselves, for the world, greater things than we have as yet imagined, let us lay hold upon Christ as never before. It seems to be the midnight of earth's emergency; it may be just before the daybreak of its deliverance. The Son of God alone can save us and our world; but it is the most momentous fact of all we know, that He waits upon us to constrain Him to save, and will wait upon us if He has to wait forever.

IV.

(B. C. 1491.—Exodus xxiv. 9–11.)

CHRIST UPON SINAI.

There have been times when a man, lifted aloft upon the summit of some mountain, has, like the statue of an illustrious character upon its pedestal, given that mountain a name and dignity peculiar to itself forever. It is as if the Alexander of the hour had permitted the Grecian sculptor to carve, as he proposed to do, Mount Athos into an equestrian statue of the conqueror of the world. When Xerxes wept, seated upon the peak overtopping the Hellespont, beholding his armies marching by millions beneath him to their death upon the fields and seas of Greece; when Boabdil, the conquered king of the Moors, upon the cliffs overhanging Granada, sighed his farewell forever to his former realm; when Balboa, halting his companies at their base, stood alone upon the Rocky Mountains, gazing (the first European so to do) upon the Pacific,—those peaks were made forever luminous by their feet. Yet what mole-hills are all the mountains upon the planet in comparison to that summit, of which—aflame forever not with volcanic fires from within, but beneath the feet of the Maker and Monarch of all—we have now to speak!

There are in Scripture certain passages which appear impossible of reconciliation; contradictions which clash

swords with each other, as if with the violence of Satan warring upon Michael. The Almighty Maker is often spoken of, for instance, as "the King immortal, invisible," "dwelling in light which no man can approach unto," "whom no man hath seen, nor can see." "No man hath seen God at any time." "Thou canst not see my face," Jehovah declares to Moses, "for there shall no man see my face and live," yet almost in the same breath the Spirit of all truth adds: "The Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend." And once and again is it said of Moses and the elders, in the narrative with which we have here to do: "They saw the God of Israel; they saw God and"—instead of perishing at the sight—"did eat and drink."

With such force does steel strike steel in a contradiction like this; yet with such force as to strike out a fire which illumines the world! From the outset of the story of the march of the Israelites from Egypt, a distinction is assumed, and without explanation of Persons in God. "I will not go up in the midst of thee," Jehovah declares to Moses, "I will send an angel before thee"; and always after, as so often before, this agent is spoken of as "the angel of God," "the angel of the covenant," "the angel of His presence."

Jacob in his last days speaks of Him as "the angel which redeemed me from all evil." "The angel of his presence saved them," it is said of the Hebrews; "in his love and in his pity He redeemed them, and He bare them and carried them all the days of old."

Like a cashier who has to count his gold swiftly, so much is to be counted, we pass on to say, uncontra-

dicted of any, that through all Scripture this angel wears all the names of God; possesses and exercises all the attributes of God; never speaks as a messenger from God, but invariably as himself originating all he does and says. In every instance he prostrates the man with whom he confers at his feet in irrepressible worship, which he invariably accepts as his due. In one word this Person reveals himself as the fellow and equal of the Almighty Maker of earth and heaven; the assertion being continually made and enforced with all manner of penalty, that there is but one living and true God, and that to worship any other and under any form is death!

How harsh seems the conflict of assertion! Yet how perfect the harmony into which it melts in music, when in one way and another the Holy Spirit is continually affirming: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." The appearances of this Son of God, who is also the Son of man, to Abraham (as we have seen), and to Jacob, reiterated in those yet to be narrated,—to Moses, Joshua, Gideon, the parents of Samson, to Ezekiel, the three Hebrews and to Daniel,—are but so many ways in which, long before and anticipating his birth of Mary, Jesus repeats his assertion to his disciples, for persisting in which He is afterward slain: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." From beginning to end of the history of the race, which is but the history of its salvation, is He Alpha and Omega, Beginning and End, First and Last; "Jesus Christ, yesterday, to-day, and forever the same."

An astonishing illustration of this we have in the book of Exodus. To the Jews encamped about Sinai, the law had been given in syllables of thunder a few days before. But this thunder is not to die upon the barren air and more barren ears of the hearers. Nor does the finger of God write its clauses sufficiently deep upon the tables of stone, or the stonier hearts of the Hebrews. Summoned thither by the Almighty, Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu and seventy of the elders of Israel, ascend the slopes of the mountain. Clinging as if to their mantles, knowing only what they then did of Him who had led them out of Egypt, let us try to see with their eyes. We climb the long reaches of Sinai, trembling at our temerity as we pass the bounds which have been set. Slowly we ascend from ledge to ledge of the rocky way, until the camp lies far below, its tents dwindled into autumnal leaves. We pass shuddering through the clouds of smoke and storm. At last having reached the highest summit, when we lift our eyes, what do we see? Let imagination stand mute while the Spirit declares that "there was under His feet, as it were, a paved work of sapphire stone,"—that is, the azure of the skies made rock,—"and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness."

Above the storm, we have reached the realm of eternal calm; beyond the thunder, is the abode of unbroken silence; while below is the blackness of darkness, we stand in the serene centre of eternal light. In this home of undisturbed seeing, Moses has had full opportunity for coming to know that "pattern of things on the mount" which consists in an apprehension of the mode of salvation in and by Christ, of which every-

thing in the tabernacle and worship below is but an outer emblem. Tarrying here, we see the God of Israel: and that this God is none other than Jesus Christ our Lord! Nay, He strengthens us to comprehend, unbewildered, what it is essential we should know, and know with all possible distinctness!

Let us understand, that while those who go up the mount with Moses are privileged with him to see the God of Israel, they are to worship afar off. It is Moses who draws nearest to "the devouring fire," wherein like the purple of a monarch God wraps Himself. And he is allowed nearest God for one definite purpose,—that he may receive as from the very hand of God, and written with His very finger, the Law. Upon that rests the entire meaning of this most marvellous interview between God and man. When it is said Moses and the seventy "saw God," and yet again "saw God," it is impossible not to believe that they saw Him under the same aspect as He was seen of Abraham, Jacob, and those in the narratives yet to be rehearsed. What that is, inspiration explains when it says of Moses that he "esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt."

One thing which we are enabled to know is, that bowed to the rock upon which we are arrived, *we are at the source of all that goes among men by the name of Law.* But here is no cabinet council, as of the wisest intelligences of heaven grouped about some golden board for the slow consideration, statute by statute, of the rules by which the universe is to exist and move; much less is the mountain summit crowded, range upon range, with an assembled parliament of the

principalities and powers, thrones and dominions, the loyal representatives, selected for superiority from all worlds and ranges of intelligent existence. "With whom took He counsel?" No, we see there the one unaccompanied legislator, the one origin and Enactor of all Law, as He is the sole Judge and Executive; and it is the God we can see, even Jesus Christ our Lord!

To-day science stretches itself in pursuit of, has but one supreme Object of investigation and passionate desire; and that is—Law. Let us try to understand then, that

First, all that we style physical law is in and from Christ. "All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. He is before all things, and by Him all things consist." All Law in our world and all worlds: all law as to earth, air, water, fire, and the unknown realms of electricity, of ether; whatever creates and continues life in all its modes—vegetable, animal, intellectual, emotional, infernal, celestial; whatever is the material, process, power of that we name Law, its designing, creation, alteration, continuance,—is in and of and from Him alone. But with this goes the

Second Fact, that "He was made of a woman, made under law." So far as any man is the subject of law, is He also. Upon that comes as the

Third Fact, that when revealed to men during His life on earth, and to accomplish that for which He came, Jesus was, at will, both below and above all physical law. He creates the senses; yet is He obedient to the senses. He originates both organ, appetite, and food; yet does He hunger and thirst. No other than

He creates nerve, sinew, muscle, and that life and force which live along and in these; yet is He a working carpenter, He rests by the wayside, He must needs sleep. Tossed by the storm He awakens to calm the storm, and by instantaneous arrest, even at its sources thousands of miles away. The author of what we name gravitation, He yields to it and walks the soil, or ascends supreme over it to heaven. He is Life, yet lays life down and takes it again. Yea, all the wild working of what we misname chance and accident is certainly under his hand. Originating all that is, He sustains, or dashes it as He will into dust again, into the nothing from which He called it.

It may help us to remember that He is equally the author, where what we call moral law is concerned. It is He who has put these into the Pandects of Justinian, the Precepts of Manu and Confucius, the Code Napoleon, the myriad-fold enactments of the Norseman's *Thing*, the edicts of Emperors, the statutes of Congress and Parliament, of all we know as Law.

What a swift simplifying it is for us to trace this to the source of all rule, in this man who is also God. Laws are myriad many, He is One. Draco wrote out his laws in letters so small, upon tables fixed aloft so high, that his miserable subjects must needs sin through ignorance, and so die. To a majority of our race, now as always, law is but the ever-varying caprice of Czar and despot. True is it that law is but another name for the will of God, yet is it the infinitely righteous will of an infinitely unchanging God; a will which He has bedded not in tables of stone only, but originally in the fleshly tables of the deepest, sincerest, most legible

intuitions of our nature; yea, intuitions which He has rewritten upon every heart which turns to Him, by the power of the Holy Ghost, which is God Himself dwelling in the heart and forever repeating his Law as with his own lips,—leaving us without excuse.

"By me," He declares, "kings reign and princes decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth." "The powers that be," legislative, judicial, executive, "are ordained of God," are the temporary agencies of Him who is not merely the author of all formulas of right and wrong, but of the eternal distinction between these in their inmost essence. Although the source of all moral law, He, the august author of all law, becomes a felon tried, sentenced, slain as such. Worse, He becomes the supreme criminal perishing before the shuddering universe, under the wrathful unanimity of mob law, civil law, church law; the Almighty Father seemingly sanctioning all, and giving Him over to apparently eternal doom as justly slain. Worse than even that, "He is made sin for us"; that is, He is made the essential unrighteousness for us. With what appalling clearness is that declared. Satan is always put forward as the author, maintainer of all evil. As such he is named "the old serpent." Yet fasten your eyes upon that which glitters, lifted up upon a pole in the centre of the Hebrew camp, perishing because bitten of fiery flying serpents. It is a brazen serpent, the visible emblem of Satan and of all sin. Yet it is by a look at that, that the dying Hebrew is healed, because that which is the symbol of Satan is likewise the symbol of the Son of God and of man, and the symbol of that God yet man

dying upon the cross under the eternal doom of Satan and of sin!

It is to *that* we have come! Mount Sinai towered terrible in all manifestations known to men of wrath and infliction—smoke, cloud, thunder, lightning, flaming fire, earthquake, pealing trumpet. "The Lord descended upon the mount in fire, and the smoke thereof was as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly." "Speak thou unto us and we will hear," the flying people say to Moses, "but let not God speak unto us lest we die!" Try to understand that here is He who, as Supreme Legislator and Judge, is the one Executive also. He it is who drove Adam and Eve, first tried before and sentenced of Him, forth from Eden. This is He who whelms the world by a deluge; who destroys Sodom and Gomorrah; who desolates Egypt; who smites the rebels in His own camp with sword and consuming flame. He it is who wept over, yet afterward consumed, Jerusalem; by whom is every death which befalls plant, animal or man, and by whom the world is to perish at the end. "Lest He be angry and we perish out of the way," we are urged to "kiss the Son."

And He it is who endures all penalty in his own person! Why speak of his poverty afterward in Judea, his humiliation, his death? If He reveals himself upon Sinai as wielding all weapons against sin, it is that we may the better understand how it is He who upon Calvary endures in our place the utmost those weapons can inflict. He dies beneath the terrors of Sinai converging themselves upon his head!

Contrast the publicity of Christ on Calvary with the

privacy, so to speak, of Christ upon Sinai. It is, at the farthest, an obscure handful of people who are grouped in Horeb. They were slaves under the lash in Egypt but yesterday; are without an inch of soil of their own; are not as yet even the least of nations—nothing in fact but an ignorant horde, so far as they are themselves concerned, a caravan of wanderers in the wilderness. Even these are debarred from drawing nigh the mountain by bounds which it is death to pass; though no bounds are needed,—such is the tempest upon Sinai, such is the terror of that voice from its summit, driving them far away. Of these, it is but a score or so who are permitted to ascend to their Lawgiver, nor may they sojourn there for more than a moment. And how little, how very little, could even Moses have understood, gazing bewildered upon the God of Israel!

See, in contrast to this, the same Son of God upon Calvary. He has been born, has lived in the land an average life-time. His three years' journeying to and fro have made his person familiar to many; and now He dies in broad day, lifted up upon the cross so that all may see. It is the poor privilege of the lowliest to die at home, curtained carefully from the eye of the stranger, begirt with loving friends, soothed sweetly asleep by the gentle touches, the gentler voices and tears and farewell kisses of those he best loves. But here! The city swarms with multitudes, come up from all the world to a principal feast of the Jews. In the centre of an unpitying multitude, a scoffing felon on either side, a torrent of bitter enemies coming and going as the mood takes them, stripped of his raiment, He dies. Dies in view of the whole world; dies under the gaze of

all ages past, all ages to come. The lips which announce all law, cry out in the agony of the infliction of all penalty. The hand which wields the sword is held fast by the nail, while the decree goes forth: "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who is my fellow, saith the Lord!"

Say, you have reached some idea of this, the God of Israel, as He reveals himself upon the summit of Sinai as the author of all law; not until you also behold Him dying upon Calvary, under the penalty of law, do you begin to understand who He is. Twenty-five hundred years from Creation had to pass before men could understand, however dimly, the Son of God upon Sinai.

Another fifteen hundred years go by. To a people set apart for the exclusive studying of who and what the promised Messiah shall be, all help is given by prophet, psalmist, high-priest; sacrifice offered almost every hour; lessons enforced, too, by chastisement; and yet when the Son of God comes again, sojourning a lifetime with men on this occasion, who comprehends Him? In vain He explains himself by word and gracious deed; in vain He reveals the very Godhood of God by a life overflowing with divinest meaning; not one man of God's own long and thoroughly trained Church, not even rabbi or high-priest, understand him—not one! So far are they from this, that they reject and slay him. Equally in vain is it that He calls about him a chosen band of disciples; in vain He abides with them closely and continually; tells them by word and work who He is; assures them, as strongly as language can do it, that as the Messiah so long

promised He must be slain and rise again from the dead.

Yet even such a disciple as John cannot come to see why, and what, and who Christ is. Thunderstruck by the killing of their Lord, they are, if possible, yet more astonished by his resurrection. And we? Nearly twenty centuries have we had opportunity for finding out what the Old Testament, illumined by the New, teaches as to the Son of God. We see the conquest of the race so far by the Christ; we know that not a Brahma nor a Buddha, not a Llama nor a Mahomet, but is paling and perishing, falling backward and ceasing to be, before the "I am He!" of the advancing King. For nearly six thousand years, and in ever-increasing energy, God the Holy Ghost has made it his sole and exclusive work to show us Christ.

We know, through and through, about all there is to be known of Alexander, Julius Cæsar, George Washington; and yet this Son of God, who is also Son of man, author of yet obedient to all law, the inflicter yet endurer of all penalty, Master and servant, subject and Sovereign, Maker yet man and brother—of Him what do we know? Now and again the Godhead so flashes through his manhood that we shrink back. So astonished and offended are we at times that infinite wisdom does not walk the way we have chalked out for his feet, that we turn off in a pet,—*We* from *Him!*

Then it is, we scour the wilderness—east, west, south, north! We will find somewhere, somehow, an at least more subservient Lord. Whatever it is that drives or seduces us away, what do we find instead? Whirling sands of conjecture, and never-ending conjecture; a

rubicund mammon, whose highest health is hottest fever; a pretentious self, whom a straw can stab and a cough can shake to dust; or—and it is the very latest discovery—an empty chaos, which we try to make a cosmos by naming it agnosticism! Who of us has not thus gone off but to come back again, because there is nothing else,—the gods of to-day not one whit better than the sticks and stones of the earlier paganism? When one asks me, "What are twice two?" how can I help replying, "Twice two are four." After all such wandering, when the Lord looks into my eyes and demands, "Will you also go away?" so long as I am neither knave nor idiot I at least must reply: "Lord, to whom can I, shall I go? Thou hast the words of eternal life, and I believe and am sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God!"

Even Job, standing in the gray dawn of the ages, with the instinct of even a weed for the light, reaches hungry hands toward the future, saying: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another." And how much more may we say it of His last, as of His next appearing!

As on other occasions, so now there is an eating and drinking when friend meets friend. At the inmost centre and seat of law, as of love, there must be feast and festival, since it is the Son of man who is there also. Was it a social meal as when He walked the earth with his disciples, or sojourned, ages before that, with Abraham? Such meals found their culmination

at the Last Supper; is this meal a prophecy of that? Where law is, when sinners confront it there must a blow be struck. So evidently is this true, that to the reconciliation of the eating and drinking it is added: "and upon the nobles," there present, "of the children of Israel He laid not his hand." Judas ate and drank with Christ at the Last Supper; and although within the same hour the traitor was to sell Him to death, yet Christ smote him not. Within a little while Nadab and Abihu are to rebel, and to die for it, as Judas did for his sin; yet is no blow struck them there, no blow since; on this occasion, as upon the one so long after, He is there upon whom all blows are to exhaust themselves. To destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, as He did Jerusalem long years afterward, as He is yet to smite our globe to ashes, is one aspect of the Son of God. But not until He has been offered and finally rejected. And that is the one chiefest sin for which, and for which alone, He does smite a man dead; until then, until that, His hand falls upon nothing nearer unprofitable man than the barren fig-tree.

Let us remember, too, the bounds which had been set about the mount. Let man or beast pass those bounds, and death is the result. To-day what veil is not rent? What fence is not broken down? To Christ upon Sinai, it is death to come. From Christ upon Calvary, it is death to stay away. For not to the seventy of the Hebrews alone, to every soul of the entire race, has the invitation gone forth: "Come unto me." "He that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out."

Let us try to remember, as we come down the slopes

of Sinai, that as Christ is the Alpha of the Revelation of God to man—not a word, not even a letter of a word of revelation before Him—so is He the Omega, too, of all manifestation of God to man. Well may Scripture close with a curse upon whosoever adds to or takes away from its pages, since it is written to tell only of the Son of God, and has said concerning Him all that is necessary to us in learning, or to the Holy Spirit in teaching us, of Christ. "It is finished!" Nothing remains after the atoning sacrifice, except for men, enabled by the Spirit, to tell of Christ to the world. Who can say what we may come to see hereafter? It may be, we shall behold great globes suddenly, the universe through, breaking out of nothingness into bloom like roses; or worlds, it may be, rising out of the ashes of a previous existence. New ranges and ranks of celestial beings may be created of God. In our own eternal evolution we are to attain to a manhood, a womanhood, in Christ, far beyond all we now imagine. "Beloved, it doth not yet appear what we shall be." "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard,"—how familiar to us the promise. But, Christ? There may be new aspects of Christ, new manifestations. Not archangel nor mortal man imagined before Bethlehem what its manger was to bring; and who can say what new unfoldings there may be of His infinite nature during—who knows what emergencies Eternity conceals? But it will be Christ, Alpha, Omega; Beginning, End; First, Last.

Let us bear down with us from Sinai, then, this most simple yet sufficient fact, that when we pass through the mere externals and get to the inmost core and centre

of all, it will be to find Christ there. Because commanded to do so, climb up the ragged rocks through the terrors of Sinai, Law and doom; and on the loftiest summit this is what you find—Jesus Christ! Press your path through the ever-changing smoke of all the skepticisms; through the thunder of creed and dogma; deep and yet deeper toward the deepest soul and explanation of all affliction, of all mystery, of all seeming contradiction—when you reach the inmost goal, it is to come upon Christ. It is little we know of dying, but what we do know is, that when passing through the valley and shadow of death we have arrived at its densest darkness, it is to hear Him say, "*I* am with thee." Hasten with rapture through the gates of heaven, through its splendors and companionships, its angels and its anthems, farther and yet farther away from earth into the inmost source of all its holiness and happiness, and what will we find? "I have a desire," said the apostle, "to depart and be with Christ!" "And so shall we be ever with the Lord!"

"For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words. But ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect—and to JESUS."

V.

(B. C. 1451.—Joshua v. 13–15.)

CHRIST AS COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF.

We all know that however much we may have heard of a person, however many letters we may have had from him, although we may possess portraits and photographs of him from every point of view and without number, yet for us to see and converse with him is for us to know him as for the first time. As there is no being with whom it is so important that we should enjoy the closest intimacy possible as with our Maker, so is there no one who insists upon a knowledge and friendship which shall be, and to the last degree, so personal. Not that He does not know each one of us always and infinitely; but He seeks that we should know Him in return as thoroughly as is possible to men and women like ourselves. Now as Moses was the Lawgiver of Israel, it is natural that God should show himself to him upon the very summit of Sinai, from which He gives the Law, and as Law-maker, and as He whom the world is afterward to know more perfectly as He who for our sakes endures all that the outraged Law can inflict. Because Law has reference to men, not separately so much as organized into tribes or nations, so must Moses be attended by witnesses, fellow-rulers with him of Church and State.

But Moses is succeeded by Joshua. His duty is to lead the Israelites over Jordan, and to settle them in Canaan. In doing this, his chief work will be to fight the inhabitants of the land, who for their sins are to be driven out; a holy God employing war in this case as He had employed fire in that of the cities of the plain. Joshua is alone responsible for the result. He has no staff of under-officers with whom he advises; therefore is he alone during his marvellous interview with God, as described in the fifth chapter of the book of Joshua, and Creator and creature meet upon the very soil over which the war is soon to rage.

Let us set out with a clear idea of the situation. For forty years have the Israelites wandered about in the wilderness. They are almost wholly without arms, and it is little they know of drill or battle. From the hour they crossed Jordan their supplies have ceased from the skies; every morsel of food for their swarming hosts must be had at the edge of the sword from the inhabitants of the invaded land. They have no allies, while all the nations before them,—warriors for ages past and men of enormous stature,—have swung their allied armies into one embattled front against the invaders; it being well known that here is no quarter, the black flag of extermination flying over both armies. Unlike his enemies, the march and manœuvres of Joshua's forces are encumbered with flocks and herds, women and children, the infant and the aged, while the Jordan and the wilderness in the rear prevent any possibility of retreat. Both armies fight for existence; but the Canaanites are upon their own soil, knowing every hill and glen, and vastly

outnumber their invaders. Too well does Joshua know that his troops are liable to sudden panic, and that one false move upon his part or one serious defeat, and —caught in a trap between the foe in front, and Jordan overflowing all its banks in the rear—there is nothing for him and his but annihilation.

The night of the day during which Jordan has been crossed, has fallen. It is a most critical hour. True, Joshua knows that God, who has led them so far, is still with them; but he has been thoroughly taught, as in time we all come to be, that God does nothing whatever for men until (as we saw in the desperate endeavors of Jacob) they have themselves done, and to the utmost, all it is possible for them to do. The Almighty waits, his omnipotence held in reserve, along the line of the impossible; not until that line is reached does He lift a finger, then or now, for the help of any one. Take the story of the siege of Londonderry; take the scores of years during which Holland struggled for its own and the liberties of all lands and ages to come against Spain, then master of the world; and we see that men are left unhelped, as it seems, until they have crossed the abysm of the impossible, until they have fought and endured up to such summits of heroism as to be second only to God himself; then, not until then, does God cross to their aid the small space between them and himself; always is it so.

It is easy to imagine how keen must have been the anxiety of Joshua as to the result. At any moment, all Canaan may precipitate itself upon him. With eyes sharp to see who may be lurking behind tree or rock or hill, he makes his rounds. In what simple language

does inspiration clothe events the most significant. "He lifted up his eyes," we read, "and looked, and behold, there stood a man over against him, with his sword drawn in his hand; and Joshua went unto him and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay; but as Captain of the host of the Lord am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my Lord unto his servant? And the Captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy; and Joshua did so." To this is added not one word! All we know is that then and there, and in close conference, this Commander-in-Chief of the armies of God so instructs this his Lieutenant as to the campaign upon which he has entered, as that the complete conquest of the land is the result, with the settlement therein of the children of Israel.

We are continually commanded to "go on to know the Lord"; are required "to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ"; and the desire of every believer is, with the Apostle, counting everything else but as dross and as dung, "that I may know Him." This is, in a word, "Eternal Life—to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." How continually is Christ presented to us as a babe in the manger, a divine teacher, and worker of beneficent wonders; an atoning sacrifice living, dying, rising again, ascending to heaven, and now ruling his people and the world.

Yet are there other aspects of the Son of God which are too much forgotten. The cherubim stand guard at

the gate of Eden, their flaming swords turning every way to prevent entrance,—so soon in history is that weapon drawn, and by celestial hands! It is with a drawn sword the angel bars the path of Balaam. But that the Son of God should wear a helmet and grasp the same weapon,—what are we to think of that? Yet is He named the "Captain of our salvation," and "God, the victory of Israel." He is named "the Prince of Peace," yet does He himself declare of another feature of his mission: "Think not that I am come to send peace on the earth; I am come not to send peace, but a sword." Very often is it said of Him, "The Lord is a man of war." We read of Him as traversing upon foot the plains of Judea; "the chariots of God," it is also said, "are twenty thousand." Very meekly does He ride to death at Jerusalem upon an ass, yet most expressly is He described as riding also upon horses, red, white and black, and followed by the armies of heaven. His is said to be "a vesture dipped in blood," —not his own blood merely, but that of his foes likewise. He grasps a rod, with which He dashes the nations in pieces. "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty!" is the exclamation concerning Him, who is declared to "ride conquering and to conquer." If He wears a crown of thorns, He is also represented as "having on his head many crowns," each the result of some well-fought field. "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in!" So very little have we considered Him in this light, that it is well we too should ask with those upon the battlements of heaven, "Who is this king of glory? The Lord strong and

mighty," is the exultant reply, "the Lord mighty in battle. The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory."

What would be the value of a history of the Prince of Orange, of Washington, of Napoleon, which spoke of these only as rulers in time of peace, leaving out all mention of who and what they were during the storm and shock of battle? The pitiful weakness of our piety, the often merely sentimental languor which finds its highest exercise in soothing itself into dreams of heaven with religious lullabys,—is not this due to our taking so one-sided a view of Christ, our Captain as well as our Saviour? Our religion, and we ourselves, would have more pith and sinew against the overmastering worldliness and unbelief, if we dwelt more upon the warlike character of Him who hates as heartily as He loves, whose voice could rise to rolling thunder upon Sinai, whose hand can and does and will dash the nations to shreds like a potter's vessel. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given," and his name is more than "Wonderful, Counsellor, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace,"—He is also "the Mighty God." Before the terrors, too, of his scarred face the world shall falter and fly.

The history of our race begins as against the background of heaven lurid with battle. There is intimation of terrible encounters between the Son of God and Satan. "I saw," said the Leader of the celestial armies, "Satan fall like lightning from heaven,"—hurled we know from whose hand. When the war is transferred to our soil, and Satan is the prince—the god—of this world, the same victorious Leader comes, as He Himself declares, "to destroy the works of the

devil." When we say that He accomplishes this by his death upon the cross, by weapons of love, it is well; but ours is a disastrous mistake, if we imagine that the work of Christ is exhausted in that! Far from understanding the outset and end of it all, there are things so blown into our ears as by the blast of trumpets, so beaten and burned into us by the assaults of sorrow, that we cannot but keenly know and bitterly weep the appalling facts. Our very flying for shelter behind the shield and buckler of our great Captain shows how well aware we are of "the terror by night and the arrow that flieth by day, of the pestilence that walketh in darkness and the destruction that wasteth at noonday," for "a thousand" *do* "fall at our side, and ten thousand at our right hand." Storms in air and upon water, earthquake and volcano, the innumerable forms of what we name "accidents"; poisons in mineral, in vegetable, in even the meanest insect; the savage fury of bird and beast, depending upon battle for daily bread;—when I see meteors hurled like cannon balls through the air, and the waves which dash upon the cliffs of earth but the reflection in vignette, as it were, of the fiery billows hurled fifty thousand miles aloft in the sun; when astronomers tell me that three hundred stars have been seen to flash out in flame and then perish forever from the eyes of men, and that the ghastliest graveyard upon our planet is a paradise compared to the moon, scorched into a jagged cinder;—do I not learn in things like this that there has been, is, and will be war, and that it is little I know of the Son of God if I know of Him only as shepherd and loving friend?

What is all history but the annals of war between men, war by sneer and satire, by slander and curse, by fist and dagger, by sword and spear, up to the Waterloos and the Gettysburgs deluging nations with blood. From the wrangle of a group of sparrows over a crumb up to the fierce watch, forever breaking into battle, of the nations over Constantinople, we learn that war, not peace, is the law of life. Civilization does travel, as Napoleon said, "in a powder-cart"; and while we rejoice in the nobler forces at work, we know that the future must and will find use for the ever new discoveries in torpedoes and armored ships, for the ever-drilling millions of men whose sole business is to be ready for the next crash of nation upon nation.

And this is why such striking instruction is to be had from this revelation of Christ to Joshua as an armed man and captain of the hosts of the Lord. The entire birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ took place within the narrow limits of Judea; yet is Christ none the less the Lord and Saviour of the whole race. So, it took but a brief time—this interview between the leader of a handful of Jews and the Son of man; yet does Jesus Christ in and by that interview make himself known to us, and to all, as armed from head to foot, as holding his sword drawn and ready in his hand, because He is in the largest and truest sense Commander-in-chief of all war from the beginning to the end of the world.

Surely there is no need to point out how this visitor, coming upon Joshua as He did upon Abraham, Jacob, and Moses, is distinctly said to be a man, is clad as a

man, armed as a man, speaks, is seen and spoken to as a man. Equally plain is it that He is God. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve!" is that which goes with the "Get thee behind me, Satan!" of Christ to the adversary; yet here Joshua falls unrebuked at the feet of this mailed warrior and worships Him. When John in his vision of heaven prostrates himself before the angel that showed him its wonders, not Paul at Lystra hastens more swiftly to prevent it. "See thou do it not!" exclaims the angel, "worship God!" Nor is Joshua's worship accepted only. He is commanded, as was Moses at the burning bush, to remove his shoes from his feet. And why the spot is holy, is plain when the divine visitant says: "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid," as was Joshua in this case, "to look upon God." It is not in the scope of language to make it clearer than it is, that here again,—as to Abraham, Jacob, Moses,—does Jesus Christ anticipate his birth in Bethlehem, showing himself as Captain of the armies of God. Therefore is it, that the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews declares that it was "Jesus" who led the Israelites into Canaan.

Now no one denies that Christ is our great Commander, so far as our spiritual warfare is concerned. As it was immediately after having obeyed God and circumcised himself and his household, that Abraham was visited of Christ, so was Joshua the more apt to be visited of the Son of God, seeing that he had seen to it just before that every Israelite submitted to this rite and eaten of the passover. When we are required now

to "endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ," to "put on the whole armor of God," or when Paul speaks of himself as having "fought a good fight," we are but too familiar with what is meant of our unceasing contest with spiritual foes within and without, and how entire is our dependence upon our Lord and Leader for victory here and for the throne and crown of victory hereafter.

It is not of that we would now speak, but of *Christ as Commander-in-chief of all other war also.* Let any man glance back over the history of the world thus far. Consider the processes reaching from the dawn of history, and by which out of the ruins of Persian, Median, Assyrian, Egyptian, Phœnician,—out of all previous empires, — the Roman Empire arose and flourished. When all philosophers and historians agree that Rome and Greece, and all war and revolution going before, were preparation essential to the world of to-day, how is it possible not to see that,—long and slow, and reactive at times, as it was,—all history was under supreme control of the Christ, and toward his own interest. The trend, the converging, the culminating of all the myriad lines of events toward

> "The one divine event,
> To which the whole creation moves,"

is proof of that. Sages tell us, that there was peace for the first time in ages at the birth of Christ: was not His hand hushing all peoples for that purpose? The foes of Christ declare, that the birth and progress of the new religion was owing to the fact that Rome had made the world one, with but two

or three world-spoken languages; and they love to trace out a thousand concurrent causes to the same end, forgetting that they are putting effect in place of cause. How much more credible to recognize an Almighty Captain as ordering, for His own glory and the highest welfare of the race, all peoples and events to that end! For it was by forces avowedly hostile that Christianity was advanced, and yet more rapidly advanced. When we read of the corruption which came into religion with Constantine in the fifth century; when we shudder at the universal superstition, despotism, bigotry of some Christians, and apathetic indifference of others, we cannot but agree that Christianity was saved as much against itself as was the Old Testament Church, by the unsleeping vigilance of Christ, its King.

I see Alexander standing exultant after the battle of Arbela, the Empire of Darius—and, with that, of the whole world—lying in shattered shards at his feet. Those feet almost disdain to linger upon the soil of so small a world. He is no mere man: the son of Jupiter Ammon he, a demigod, a god, and conqueror of the earth. Yet is he in a little while to die in a drunken debauch after firing Persepolis at the whim of Thais, the courtesan. Whatever military genius he possessed was but the gift for the instant of the great Commander, using him for the effecting of His own purposes, and then dropping him from His hand as a broken sword.

"Roll up for the next twenty years the map of the world," exclaimed Pitt, when he heard of the victory at Austerlitz; yet in less than a score of years Napo-

leon and his Empire had perished like a dream. During his little hour, it was from Napoleon that his marshals drew their inspirations of victory; and what was he but the momentary marshal of the Son of God,—that Son of God who appeared to Joshua to teach all ages that He and He alone is the Commander-in-chief of all wars!

Down to date, is this great Captain the sole but sufficient explanation of all events. Hermann arises in Germany, and the legions of Rome perish in its swamps; Charlemagne and Clovis, Gregory of Rome and Savonarola, Leo Tenth and Luther, Henry Eighth and Cranmer, Philip of Spain and Bloody Mary no less than Elizabeth—how all conflicting hearts and heads and energetic hands are overruled toward one result! One wind blows, ceases to blow, blows again, and the ocean rolls in upon Leyden, and Protestantism is saved. Another wind rises to tempest, and the Armada is dashed upon the rocks of Ireland and upon the bergs of the northern seas. The breeze rises into a gale which places the William of one century upon the shores of England; blowing in another direction, and at the critical moment, it lands the William of a later age upon the same shores—and both, but in ways how different, make England and freedom what to-day they are.

Was there no like intervention in those events wherein, as with one hand, our Lord dashed feudal France into dust, and lifted as by His right hand our America upon its path toward the revolutionizing of all lands? Let any man go back to some twenty or so years ago. William is king of Prussia, and Germany

is a chaos of petty States. Maximilian is unknown out of Trieste. Napoleon Third is master of France and, as he believes, of the future. Mexico is a weltering mire of all confusion, religious and political. Our own Republic, in the opinion of so many of the wisest, is sinking into the agonies of dissolution. There is plotting, intrigue, reckless ambition, superstition sure of reaction and triumphant in its avowed infallibility. There comes sudden war; great battles are fought.

"You know," the Governor of a State said to the writer, at the close of our civil war, "that six years ago I was an avowed atheist. All the world was a whirlwind of wild confusion, over which it seemed to me absurd and impossible to imagine a God upon the throne. Party and passion, reckless ambition and an insane greed of gold, rotting corruption and sincerest contempt of goodness, reigned supreme. No two men in the world were agreed as to what would or ought to be the result of the roaring confusion,—the worst men in power, the best men sunk as into despairing apathy. Yet, see what has been wrought out of this devil's own Inferno of crime and folly! Sir," said the politician, and the tears stood in his eyes as he said it, "I do know to-day, no sane man can help knowing, that there *is* a God! And He is a God in omnipotent control of the world He has made! Yes, sir, there *is* a God!"

Well may he have said so. Out of all the bewilderment of men and affairs, slowly, steadily, by an interlinking and outcome and irresistible logic of events, as natural as the blooming of roses and the ripening of wheat, behold what God has wrought! The Pope is stripped of his temporal power. France has become a

Republic, lasting longer than French Republic ever did before. Mexico has, for the first time, become a peaceful and prosperous nation, in the highway to all that heart can desire. Out of the German Babel has arisen a Protestant Empire in the centre of, and dominating, all Europe. Our own Republic has come out of the white-heat of the furnace, its dissevered States welded into an empire of confederated empires, cleansed of slavery under the sovereignty of law,—the nation of all nations which is making the world into its own august likeness! How can any man fail to see that Christ is indeed in command?

And what of the future? Who can say what is to come to Russia, of its struggle between Nihilist and Czar? In what way are the many millions of India to be saved? What is the Africa which shall bloom out of an Africa whose sun-burned husk has been so lately torn open? Can France remain free, alike from monarchist and Commune? Mohammedanism,—what is to be the outcome of that? Dynamite, in Irish hands, is blowing asunder its own partisans, and people from priest,—what is to come of that? And of Palestine,—what? So of our own land: capital in contest with labor,—Communism, Mormonism, political corruption, the inflowing of an enormous emigration,—how are these to result? What seems a thriving revolt against Faith, the allied Canaanites of Materialism, Agnosticism, Atheism, Positivism, Secularism,—how are these sons of Anak to be subdued by faith so feeble as ours?

As He did to Joshua, so let Christ but show himself to us, saying: "Nay, but as Captain of the host of the Lord am I now come!"—and what ghost of a dead

doubt, as to the future, can darken the soul of the feeblest of us?

"True," a disciple of a sad but determined visage will say, "and I believe that the deadliest mischief is done many a believer when, at the outset of his career, he hears too much of a dying Christ; a dead Christ; Christ rising from the dead to be merely the good shepherd. If his after experience is that of mine, or of ninety-nine hundredths of us, when he comes to see and feel that his Lord does not always hold crook and gently lead us, but is far oftener Great Commander instead, there come paroxysms of disgust at being so deceived, reactions into unbelief, and blank and bitter atheism.

"For what is the stern and stringent fact? For one man to whom the Son of God is a shepherd, there are millions to whom He is a military leader only. Even to his disciples, for one hour during which He comforts, feeds, consoles, there are days, weeks, years perhaps, when the sole and stern utterances of their Lord are, 'Wheel to the right or to the left!' 'Charge!' and very rarely 'Halt!' Look at David. For one shepherd psalm, there is a score of battle psalms from his harp, since such was his life. For once that he chants sweetly, 'He leadeth me beside still waters,' there are dozens of times when he cries out instead, 'He teacheth my hands to war, my fingers to fight, so that a bow of steel is broken in my hands!' What Heaven may be, we shall see; here the larger part of life is pain, often unavailing struggle, apparently unheard prayer, and war, war, war!"

"For my part," another disciple will say, "so suc-

cessful has my Lord been in his diplomacy, strategy, downright warfare, thus far, that I can trust Him wholly for whatever befalls! I at least can trust, and rest, and wait!"

"I, also," another will say, "can trust, but not rest, nor wait. Like Joshua, having such a Leader, I propose to go into the war under Him, with sword, spear and bow. Assured that He is in command, I know that every blow will tell. For one, I march under Him till I die!"

"Till I die!" is the exultant exclamation of another. "Yes, and beyond death!

> 'When that illustrious day shall come,
> And all thine armies shine,
> In robes of victory through the sky,
> The glory shall be thine!'"

Yet what is all our marching under Him here, and counter-marching? Strategy, warfare, endurance, defeat for the moment, victory in the end? What is this but a lifetime of drill, in view of an eternity of service and conquest under the everlasting Son of God, and among his myriad worlds? If it were but to this end, this glorious end,

> "O watch, and fight, and pray,
> The battle ne'er give o'er;
> Renew it boldly every day,
> And help divine implore!"

VI.

(B. C. 1249.—Judges vi. 11–24.)

CHRIST THE LIBERATOR.

When the children of Israel enter Canaan, it is between Mount Ebal on the one side and Mount Gerizim on the other. Standing upon one of these, an appointed band of Levites pronounces a blessing, while upon the other mount another band pronounces a curse, as they shall obey or disobey their God. And yet, in two hundred years after, the Hebrews have fallen prostrate in worship of the gods of the very heathen whom they have driven out for this sin. Swift and sure comes the prophesied vengeance upon them, and it takes the very appropriate shape of Midianite invaders.

"They encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, and left no sustenance for Israel—neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass. For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude; for both they and their camels were without number, and they entered into the land to destroy it. And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites, and the children of Israel cried unto the Lord." Driven from their homes into mountains, dens and caves, starved, slain, it is but a question of how long it will be before the last Israelite shall have perished.

In all lands and ages are we distinctly beheld of

God, who is as near to us at one time as at any other; but here is one of those emergencies in which He so yearns and presses toward us, with infinite desire to save, that He breaks through that thinnest film of blindness which prevents us from seeing Him. In the same guise as to Abraham, Jacob, Moses, and Joshua, the same angel of God shows himself to Gideon in Ophra, as we read in the sixth chapter of Judges.

We remember the young ruler who came running to Jesus and, kneeling to Him, asked: "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" Questioned by Christ, he can say, with unfaltering eyes in His, that he had observed, from his youth up, every command of God. "Then Jesus, beholding him, loved him." We can imagine the face, benignant, approving, beyond the utmost art of the painter, which Jesus turned upon him. And Peter, crouched, shivering over the fire, in the early morning, is shrivelled into a miserable cowardice as he denies his Lord—denies Him with the feeble bravado of oaths. Not Raphael nor Rubens could imagine, much less put upon canvas, that countenance which Jesus turned upon his boastful disciple,—the sudden summer, in the midst of his own agony, of rebuking yet forgiving eyes,—beneath which Peter melts into bitter weeping. In this case Christ has come to Gideon, intending by him to save Israel.

"The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor," is His salutation as He comes upon Gideon. Surely this must be a Midianite chief, so bitter is the irony—"a mighty man of valor!"—when Gideon is stealthily engaged in threshing out a handful of wheat by the wine-press, to hide it from his cruel masters.

"O my Lord," he replies, "if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? But now the Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites."

Thereupon follows a terrible indictment by the offended God of Israel, of Israel's sin, and the justice of their punishment? No! The humble mention by Gideon of the Lord, and of what the Lord had done in days past, proves of what manner of spirit this son of an idolatrous father is. Without one word of reproach, without a syllable of mention of the sins which had brought upon Israel their deserved punishment, we read: "And the Lord looked upon him." And who can conceive of that divine face, in which the more than womanly sympathy of the Man is made august by the aspect of God, come to save his covenant people, as He says: "Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites; have not I sent thee?"

Then, in obedience to command, Gideon takes ten men of his father's, men evidently influenced for good by him before; and, unable to do so by day, he throws down the altar of Baal, cuts down the idolatrous grove, offers bullocks in sacrifice to the only living and true God,—all by night. With the coming day there is commotion! Gideon is on the point of being slain by the infuriated idolaters, when Joash suddenly yields to his conscience,—his son so fearlessly leading the way,—and adds his scoffs to the helplessness of the prostrate idol.

The news flies on the wings of the wind. Swift to crush the first beginnings of revolt, the Midianites muster their forces like grasshoppers for multitude; their camels are without number, like—it is repeated—the sand by the seaside for multitude. As he throws himself open to it more and yet more, the Spirit of the Lord rushes upon Gideon. Like Roland at Roncesvalles, he puts a trumpet to his lips and sends a blast through the land, which awakens to life again in every Israelite the buried memories of God. An army is gathered about God's champion. In the end a great deliverance is wrought. The Midianites and Amalekites are slain, and for forty following years the nation is at peace.

The enemy of the era is innumerable, the rescue is wrought by one man: let that be the first thing to be noted here. Our Maker invariably repeats in us what He does in the vegetable and animal kingdom. It is from one acorn, or one grain of corn, that all oaks, all harvests come. It is from one Adam the race originates. So it always is. The entire brood of hell are from one apostate Son of the Morning. All murderers date from Cain. If there is to be an universal apostasy, Enoch confronts and denounces it. The deluge is to sweep away the population of a planet; yet but one man, Noah, avails to renew the race. Lot may go out from Haran with Abraham; but it is with that one Friend of God that the people of God, myriad-fold as sand and stars, are to begin. One Joseph avails to save from famine. One Moses suffices to rescue the Israelites. Joshua has no associate as leader of the people into Canaan. So of the ages after: there is for each

emergency but one Samuel, one David. Elisha does nothing until Elijah is translated. Isaiah is alone in his day, as are Ezekiel and Daniel in theirs. For all grandest ends there was really but one apostle—Paul.

Coming down the ages, each era of the Church has but one man: Polycarp in his day, Augustine, Chrysostom, Wickliffe, Luther. Say that there be multitudes of leaders since; if you look closely, it is only of Cromwell you think when you speak of the Puritans. There was really but one Wesley. So is it to-day, so it will be to the end, whenever, whatever be the advance to be made. It is one Robert Raikes who establishes all Sabbath-schools; one John Pounds creates all ragged-schools; one John Howard purifies all prisons; one Florence Nightingale sets the fashion for her sex where hospitals are concerned; one Henry Bergh where animals are to be rescued from cruelty.

Moon and stars have their lesser work to do,—there is but one sun from which flows all light, heat, life. The unity of the Godhead repeats itself in this, that the one God beholds himself mirrored on earth in but the one man most like Him during the rush and crush of any one great emergency. Seeing that the armies of heaven stand to-day as at a halt,—Goliath is so tall, his bearing so bold and contemptuously defiant,—is it sin for even the humblest of us to go out against him if it be with but pebble and sling? No fear but that the entire host will follow with a hurrah, and swords valorous to slay when the one man has broken the way.

Mark this, also: Acting under the instruction of Christ, his Commander, Gideon so manages as to hurl

heathen upon heathen in mutual slaughter. "The Lord set every man's sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host" of Midian and Amalek. Under the same leadership, Jonathan caused, without a blow, the Philistines to slaughter each other, even unto Bethaven. So, also, in the days of Jehoshaphat, "Stand ye still and see the salvation of the Lord!" is the cry of God to his people; and while the Israelites make heaven and earth to ring in advance with praise to God, as if for conquest already effected, the children of Ammon and Moab assault their allies of Mount Seir with such sudden fury that, as in an hour, all that remains to the Israelites is to give three days to stripping the slain of their wealth.

Was it not so in the days of the French Terror, when Robespierre and his wolfish horde perished, guillotined by their own associates? The power of the Pope,—surely it has been broken from within by the insurrection of, last of all, Spain itself against the priesthood. It was by Catholic Mexico that Romanism has been torn open there to the entrance of the Gospel. Is there not the gleam of a coming salvation for Ireland, when we see war within it between the Church and its peasants,—between those of that (in some senses) noble race who condemn, and those who uphold, dynamite and dagger? It certainly is so in the ranks of unbelief. No man has struck the philosophy of Positivism so deadly a blow as John Stuart Mill. Materialism is wrestling for existence with Spiritism, and Darwinism has no foes like Virchow and Huxley.

"I have at least a clean field," the writer heard a leading Liberal remark, as the last speaker upon the

platform of a Free-Religion Association. "Whatever one of your orators has advocated, the next has gloried in annihilating. If ever there was a fight of cats, this has been its Kilkenny." And we all know what, as these lines are written, is the verdict against their old associates of Ellis, Adler, Frothingham, each a hero in his own camp; while never in history have the Churches of Christ been as thoroughly one as now.

Like an April flash of sunshine through the fast falling rain of blood is the smile, which must have broken into laughter all Israel over, when the sorrowful fate was known of the men of Succoth and Penuel. Refusing to give food to Gideon and his faithful few while pursuing the flying foe, on his return the victor beats down their tower, scourges with thorns the seventy-seven princes thereof, and slays many others. It is a thing for but incidental mention, and yet our own observation teaches us the fate of those half-hearted souls who, siding neither with upper nor lower millstone, are ground to dust of both. Alas for the man who is too much of a Christian to give himself to the world, too fond of the world to give himself to Christ. Hovering, bat-like, between beast and bird, between night and day, he loses the full enjoyment of earth—to fail in the end, mayhap, of heaven also.

Here, as in the instance of Abraham, the host brings forth food for his guest: Gideon preparing for one a third of the supply of unleavened cakes, which Abraham causes Sarah to bake upon the earth for three. In both cases the rate of supply is upon the lavish scale of over a bushel of fine flour for the eating of one man. How does this speak of the overflowing welcome, in the instance of each host!

It is interesting to note how, by long ascent, we come to the final feeding upon Christ by faith. There is the food spread by Abraham before his marvellous guests; that upon Sinai; that brought forth by Gideon; that made into a sacrifice, when He shows Himself to Manoah and his wife. We read how the twenty loaves of bread, and the full ears of corn of Elisha, are made to suffice the hundred hungry men. As the first blooms upon an apple-tree, too young for the bearing, are but abortive efforts, feeble attempts, fragrant prophecies merely of the richly-laden orchards to come: so is this miraculous multiplication of food by Elisha, with all going before it, but a symbol of the feeding of the multitudes with the loaves and fishes,—as that is but an emblem of His flesh and blood, which He gives for the life of the world. How can we but rejoice to believe that every seed which germinates does so because it passes through those Creative hands?

For the first time in his appearances to men does Christ bring with Him to Gideon, and in the evolution of the ages, the act of sacrifice. Leaving this to the yet fuller development of his next appearance—to the parents of Samson,—let us observe here the way in which, as always, this Son of God *originates* all that He says or does. No wonder that Gideon, as the end of the interview is reached, knows who has appeared unto him, and cries out: "Alas, O Lord God! because I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face! And the Lord said unto him, Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die. Then Gideon built there an altar unto the Lord, and called it Jehovah-Shalom," *i. e.*, the Lord send peace! Too well is he informed of

what has gone before in the dealing of God, not to know that this visitant is God, taking the form of man for a closer conference with men.

"The Lord is with thee!" is the salutation of his visitor.

"O my Lord," Gideon makes answer, "if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? But now the Lord hath forsaken us!"

And the Lord looked upon him and said, "Go! and thou shalt save Israel. Have not I sent thee?"

"Have not *I* sent thee?" Here is something wholly unlike the language of any mere angel. Take any instance of the coming of an angel: such a messenger invariably speaks as a messenger. "While I was speaking in prayer," says Daniel, "even the man Gabriel, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me and said, ... 'At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to show thee,'"—merely as a messenger sent. So when an angel releases Peter, appears to Cornelius, to the disciples at the sepulchre as Christ ascends to heaven, to John in the Revelation,—it is purely as messengers they come.

In contrast with this, take the interview of Christ with Abraham: "*I* will certainly return unto thee; and lo, Sarah, thy wife, shall have a son. Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the time appointed *I* will return unto thee." Here is not the language merely of one bearing messages. "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which *I* do? For I know him." So, "because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, *I* will go down now." "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous,

then *I* will spare all the place." "Then the Lord rained . . . . fire from the Lord out of heaven." When God destroyed the cities of the plain, "God remembered Abraham."

So of every appearance of the same Son of God. "*I*, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." "Come unto me . . . . and *I* will give you rest." "If ye shall ask anything in my name, *I* will do it!" Not a precept does prophet or other sacred writer give but it is prefaced with a "Thus saith the Lord." Never is this the case with Jesus of Nazareth. He is the sole authority for what He announces, and never is the sending of the Father alluded to but it is coupled with the assurance that He and his Father are one. Peter says to Eneas: "Jesus Christ maketh thee whole." To the man born lame, Peter and John say: "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!"

In what instance does Jesus say: "In the name of my Father, be whole, be cleansed, be healed"? "Rise, take up thy bed and walk," He says to the man beside Bethesda; "Go wash," to him who was born blind; "Stretch out thy hand," to him whose hand is withered. Even in raising the dead it is: "Lazarus, come forth!" "Damsel, I say unto thee, arise!" He has, without a word, only to touch the bier upon which the widow's son is borne, to wake him to life. His death, resurrection, ascension, rule over men, sending of the Spirit, second coming, reward of the righteous, doom of the impenitent—in everything He is the Alpha, the originating source, the Way, the Truth, the Light, the Life; and all mention of his Father is, as has been said, but to show his unity and equality with Him.

How account for this, too: "Baptize," He commanded his disciples, "in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost"; yet "Be baptized," Peter says to the multitude, "in the name of Jesus Christ"; and the converted Samaritans "were baptized," we read, "in the name of the Lord Jesus"? So Peter commanded Cornelius to be "baptized in the name of the Lord." And when Paul rebaptized those of Ephesus, it is said, "They were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." Why is this? Is it conceivable that the first disciples were so impressed with the complete representation of the Godhead by Christ, that they deemed baptism in *his* name to be sufficient? Who can say?

This at least is clear,—that God works most by the weakest means. When thirty-two thousand Israelites have assembled under Gideon, the proclamation goes forth, "Whosoever is afraid, let him go home," and only ten thousand remain. Leading these to the water to drink, those who prostrate themselves to do so are sent back; while only the three hundred so eager to go that they lap up the water with their hands, are suffered to stay. Even these are stripped of every weapon. A pitcher containing a lamp, and a trumpet in the hand of each soldier; at an appointed moment, while encircling the camp of the foe by night, the pitcher broken—the lamp revealed—the cry, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!"—does the rest. But the handful accomplishing this must be further reduced. When they come to Succoth, tired and hungry from pursuing the foe, they are refused food. Yet more exhausted when they arrive at Penuel, again are they re-

fused. So that when at last they complete their conquest by the capture of Zebah and Zalmunna, reeling from very weakness they learn to its utmost the lesson of ages: how that "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world" (the apostle goes on trying to get down to the very lowest and least) "and things which are despised hath God chosen,—yea, and things which are not,—to bring to naught things that are."

"O my Lord!" Gideon at the outset, with wonderment, disclaims as a thing absurd, "wherewith shall *I* save Israel? Behold my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house." For at Tabor the Midianites had slain his brethren, each one like Gideon "resembling the children of a king," and he alone is left. And always has it been so, and will be so. Not until Cowper sinks almost to the level of his rabbits, does he produce his sweetest songs; nor can Milton take rank in his strains with the seraphim until he is old, poor, blind, abandoned by the whole world. Old age and exile must come, before the visions of Christ and of heaven can break upon John; nor can Daniel sweep, with the glance of an eagle, the farthest horizons of time until, left for twenty years in obscurity, he is further reduced by fasting and solitude. Luther lies at the last gasp in his cell before he can dash the Papacy to dust; and who does not know that Melancthon was made the wisest counsellor of the rough Reformer by perpetual sickness? It is his prosperity and power which ruin in Solomon the king otherwise

most like the Christ enthroned in heaven. Nor can Ruth be made an ancestress of Christ until widowed, stripped of her country, she gleans her scanty food after the reapers, grain by grain. Joseph ascends the throne of Egypt by way of the pit and slavery, the slander and the dungeon. The loaves and fishes of the disciples must dwindle to not enough for the twelve, before they are made enough for the many thousand; and it is only the few specks of meal on the bottom of the barrel, the very last drops of oil in the cruse, which are made inexhaustible. To his thorn in the flesh must be added age, dungeon and chains, before Paul can preach by pen those sermons which ring in the ears of the race forever. We know to what rank as to wealth, learning, social position, the first disciples belonged; and it was the favorite scoff of Celsus and Tacitus that the Christian Church was a membership of the very poorest in the lands,—criminals, slaves, lepers, and the most miserable.

The wheat-seed must rot in the soil, before it can spring into new life and sixty-fold. And if we enter upon the eternal song, strength and service of Paradise, it is by first giving up everything, and sinking into the dust and nothingness of death. But how profoundly are we taught this most astounding lesson in the case of Christ himself. Look, Stephen-like, as steadily as you can upward. Our Lord has ascended,—has He?—to the highest heights. Look downward. If we dared say it, the depths (so far as infinite distance goes) of humiliation to which He descended are deeper than are the heights to which He has ascended! And yet you shrink and shudder,—you know you do,—when your path lies downward; as if there were any other

path to the largest and loftiest service. "That the excellency of the power may be of God!" "I glory in infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me!" "When I am weak, then am I strong!" The more you are emptied of self, so much the more room in you,—is there not?—for the Son of God. It is, O Gideon, when you speak in the language of humility that He replies to you: "Go in *this* thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites! Have not *I* sent thee?"

Sixty-seven years before, Barak—stout and valiant man of war as he was—vows to Deborah, the woman who had stirred him up and urged him on against the Canaanites, "Not a step will I take unless you go with me!" And here it is the Son of God who says, "Surely *I* will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man." Sufficient assurance that,—then or now!

The history of Gideon is repeated, in some respects, a century later in that of Jephthah, the radical difference lying in this: that, as with Abraham as compared to Lot, the Son of God reveals himself in person to Gideon, and not to Jephthah, or to Barak, Ehud, Othniel, or Jehu—each a rescuer of Israel. The hidden reason of this is, that in his day Gideon is so much more like Christ than are these, as evidenced by his conciliating course toward the absurd and exasperating Ephraimites, in consequence of which conciliation nothing mars the victory. Jephthah meets their stormy folly with yet stormier wrath, and thirty-two thousand of the Ephraimites are slain,—the other men being still less like Christ in their various ways.

And, alas, even Gideon's weakest weakness lay in his

want of faith; all other feebleness being vigor in contrast with that. True, Jephthah in his day so far loses faith as, in the anguish of impending battle with Ammon, to vow a disastrous vow which robs him of his daughter, and that in the joy and climax of conquest. But, Gideon? Surely he, so much more Christ-like than Jephthah, will be stronger of faith. Surely it is enough for him that, more favored than Jephthah, God gratifies the yearning of his soul by showing Himself to him in the person of his Son! No, this offspring of idolatrous Joash must have a Christ never out of his sight and grasp. Yielding to a like weakness on the part of the people of his day, Aaron erects a calf to represent to them a God no longer present to them in the person of Moses. So, in the reckless rapture of his victory, Gideon attempts the same by melting into a tangible, palpable god the seventeen hundred shekels' weight of golden ear-rings taken from his slaughtered foes; creating thus an idol which seduces from God both himself, his household, and all Israel! O weakness of faith, when not even God incarnate suffices for Gideon and for us! This it was and is, which so affects him,—and ourselves, too, in our way,—that we must place, and change, and wring out our silly fleeces before we can quite believe; as if God in the wet fleece, or the dry, could be as much a sign to us as is our God in the man Jesus Christ! As we crawl cautiously upon our foe, we must needs have dreams to encourage us,—dreams of tumbling barley-cakes! Can the angels always keep their countenances, looking down upon us? Since our faith in God is what it is, surely His faith in us must be infinite, or we could never come, much less walk, together!

VII.

(B. C. 1160.—Judges xiii.)

CHRIST THE MASTER OF BRUTE FORCE.

Does gravitation itself draw men downward with an almost omnipotence more steady and even than the power of sin? Ninety years have not gone before the Israelites are down again prostrate in the dust, their sin taking outward and retributive shape this time in the persons of their Philistine masters. For a sixth time in Old Testament history, the Son of God comes in visible form to their relief. And now there is this much of evolution toward the days of Mary: that it is to a woman He first makes himself known,—but of that hereafter.

Again He reveals himself as "a man." We cannot look too steadily at Christ as such. And there cannot have been much to distinguish Him in outer appearance from other men of his day. In the case of the impotent man healed by Christ beside the pool, when the Jews asked, "What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed and walk?" he that was healed "wist not who it was." As he lay waiting for the troubling of the water a stranger had said to him, "Wilt thou be made whole?" It is evident there was nothing in this one man of a perpetually passing throng of men—Herodians, Romans, Hebrews, new-comers

from all parts of the world—to arrest any special attention to himself. Precisely as if to any other inquirer, seeing nothing in this person to awaken any hope that He could do more for him than any other, the impotent man replies, not using the courtesy even of "Rabbi" or "Lord": "Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool." Even after Christ had spoken to the healed man in the temple, to which he had so naturally hastened to give thanks, all that he could afterward report to the Jews was that it was Jesus which had made him whole, adding not a syllable of description thereto, simply because there was nothing else to say; so plain is it that there was nothing in the face or dress, the aspect or bearing of Christ then or at any time, to divert attention from what He said or did.

When an operation has been performed for the cataract, however successful the operation, the patient is not allowed to use his eyes all at once. For impatient weeks he must wear bandages. Very slowly and cautiously is he allowed to open his eyes, and never at first save in darkened rooms. When Jesus gave their seeing to the blind, this, like everything He does, is perfect. The man born blind, the instant his eyeballs are unlocked, looks up under the broad noon of the brilliant Syrian skies, and sees as any other man does. The only account he can give of it is: "A man that is called Jesus" has healed him. When pressed upon the subject, all he can suggest concerning his new and wonderful friend is, "He is a prophet." Urged still more, and with vehemence, to tell all he knows concerning Christ, there is nothing in the tones of voice,

manner or bearing of his deliverer, which can help him out in his defence of Him. The utmost he can say is, "If this man were not of God, he could do nothing." Jesus meets him afterward and asks, "Dost thou believe in the Son of God?" How can it be but that there was something in the voice and the aspect of this inquirer, which made the man know that this was his healer? How eagerly must he have looked at Him with his eyes so lately opened! Yet that he sees anything out of the common appearance of men is not to be thought of; for "Who is He, Lord," he asks, "that I might believe on Him?" And Jesus must say to him, "Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee." Then, and not till then, he said, "Lord, I believe."

It is true that before the "I am He!" of Christ, the multitude sent to arrest Him reel backward and fall to the ground; but that Judas did not count upon any such an outflashing of majesty is evident. His associates in the crime must have some sure sign, so as not to lay hands upon John or Peter instead: "Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: take him, and lead him away safely."

As in all the manifestations of Himself going before, so here—in this thirteenth chapter of the book of Judges. When the angel of the Lord showed himself to the wife of Manoah, of the family of the Danites, she said of him to her husband afterward, "A man of God came unto me, and his countenance was like the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible." Not so much unlike other men was He, but that she keeps her presence of mind, nor faints, nor falls.

"O my Lord," is the prayer to God of Manoah afterward, "let the man of God which thou didst send come again unto us." Hearkening to his prayer, but to the woman first as before,—that is the new feature of this revelation of Himself,—"The angel of God came again unto the woman as she sat in the field." But how carefully is it stated, "Manoah her husband was not with her." The total of the impression made upon her, upon Manoah afterward, so far as mere appearance goes, is plain when it is written: "And the woman made haste and ran, and showed her husband and said unto him, Behold! the man"—it is not even "the man of God"—"hath appeared unto me, that came unto me the other day."

How often is the word "man" used! "And Manoah arose, and went after his wife." Since Eve had led Adam from God, here for the first time does a woman come to the front; but now, and in the new order of things, she leads the man *to* God. "And he came to the Man and said unto Him, Art thou the man that spakest unto the woman? and He said, I am." Five times are we assured He was "a man." What wonder, since at creation it is said: "Let us make man in our image" . . . . "in the image of God made he man." Not when He appears to Manoah, nor when He appeared seven hundred and sixty years before to Abraham, nor when, near twelve hundred years after, He was born of Mary, did He take upon Him for the first time our nature. As the archetypal man, the Son of man,—not as a Jew, the typal man of the race,—from all eternity, even as to all eternity, does He wear our manhood.

And none the less is He also God. How deeply burned into the Hebrew mind was the announcement at Sinai, that no man can see God and live,—since here, as in the case of Jacob and in that of Gideon, the first thought, after the full manifestation is made, is that death is surely to follow. "We shall surely die," said Manoah to his wife, "because we have seen God!" We are to ask ourselves in a moment as to this revelation, Why now for the first time is it made to a woman? Meanwhile notice the clear sense, characteristic of the true Christian wife always, of this woman. She does not deny that they have seen God, though at first He seemed to be a man, an angel at the highest. "If the Lord," she reasons with household good sense, "were pleased to kill us, He would not have received a burnt-offering and a meat-offering at our hands; neither would He have shewed us all these things, nor would as at this time have told us such things as these."

The invariable law by which God uses the least likely means to his ends,—how is this brought out here! The least likely of all the tribes for this purpose—that of Dan—is to supply a deliverer. As in the case of Sarah, of Rebekah during so many years, of Rachel, of the mother of Samuel, of the mother of John the Baptist,—so here the wife of Manoah is under that (to a Hebrew woman) bitterest of all bans and hardest to bear of all curses: she is barren. Here, as always, the human instrumentality is so ordered that the excellency of the power is unmistakably of God. Doubtless this her sore sorrow had fitted her all the more, as affliction generally does, for the blessing which was now to be hers,—the highest blessing and honor, by far, which had ever befallen Hebrew woman.

When Jacob, holding fast to his midnight visitor, pauses, panting from his desperate struggle with Him for a blessing, he asks of Him: "Tell me, I pray thee, thy name." Yet he has to be satisfied with the reply, "Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name?" His overmastered antagonist gives Jacob his life, gives him the continued possession of wife and child, of servants and herds; gives him the heart of his brother Esau; His name He will not give him. "I asked him not whence he was, neither told he me his name," the wife of Manoah says to her husband of her first interview with the mysterious visitor. Therefore is it that Manoah asked of Him afterward: "What is thy name, that when thy sayings come to pass we may do thee honor?"

There is a slight advance upon the unveiling of the mystery, hidden from the foundation of the world, when the reply comes now to Manoah: "Why asketh thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret?" In the Hebrew it is "Wonderful." Well do we of this day know who is meant when it is said, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and his name shall be called Wonderful,"—that is the *first* of the series,—"Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." Great, indeed, is this "Mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh." How profound a secret this was, we may judge when we read that during the ages before Bethlehem the angels "desired to look into it," and desired in vain. As we know to-day that Christ is to come again, but know not how nor when, it is plain that the celestial people knew from the beginning that there was to be some revelation of God

in his Son to our race; but when it was to be, what it was to be, was an impending yet thoroughly veiled mystery, which at once awakened and defied their intensest—shall we say curiosity?

When tabernacle and temple arose, replete with symbols and types of the Christ to come, did the most eagle-eyed of archangels know wherein lay the solution and fulfilment of these? Who can say? When Gabriel announces to Mary the babe to be born, no profounder hush of expectation fell upon her than upon heaven. When, by command of God, one angel proclaims to the shepherds the birth of the Babe, does not the heavenly host accompanying hearken to hear? It was not new to them that the Son of God should appear to men as a man. That, as we are now seeing, had often taken place in ages past. Like Adam, in these instances He came as a man full-grown, in the prime and plenitude of manhood. But now? That the eternal Son of God, whom from their creation they had worshipped, veiling their eyes as they bowed before Him throned in the ineffable glory of the Father, should now begin at the beginning of manhood, should like every other of the race be born into the world as a babe, a weak infant upon a mother's bosom, in a stable, in a manger!

For an instant there is a pause among those who follow that favored one, as he makes to the shepherds the first announcement,—the pause of amazement unutterable. They had beheld wonders in heaven,—new worlds budding into being, new races of creatures flashing forth from nothingness,—but none like this. As the astounding revelation of infinite love grows clearer to them, they are swept as upon the tide of gladness

irrepressible out of heaven itself. What is left there to compare with this? "Glory to God in the highest," they sing as they never sang before; "on earth peace, good-will to men!" And, as by the very effulgence of their new joy, midnight is made meridian noon.

Do they know of the yet greater wonders in store as they watch the growth, the journeyings, the marvels wrought by Christ? More than twelve legions hover over Gethsemane; and it must have tested the drill and discipline of these when they beheld, with swords still sheathed, the arrest of the Son of God! Could anything other than the almightiness of God have held them patient, while he is mocked and scourged? He, the Lord of Life, bound, spit upon, condemned to die, toiling up Calvary underneath his cross! Not the oldest, wisest archangel, standing next to the throne, had conceived of love like this! The paralysis of horror and amazement helps to keep them submissive to the restraining will of God. Imagination recoils. Who can imagine how the angel host regarded the agony and death of Christ, the withdrawal of his Father, the bearing to the tomb of Him from whom all existence proceeds? We may dare at least to imagine that heaven itself suspends song and service during those three days, and that the dismay—if we dared so to word it—is equalled by the return of heaven to more than its glory and gladness when Christ rises again!

It is the easier to understand how the purpose of God in Christ was held secret from the angels, when we see how little it was comprehended by the people whose entire Scripture and worship were given but to testify of the Messiah. The gospel of Isaiah is only less clear

than that of John. All along there had been flashes of meaning from the lips of prophets: "A virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel"; "They gave me gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." "If ye think good," the Almighty says by a prophet five hundred years before the event, "give me my price. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter, a goodly price that I was prized at of them! And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord." "One shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then He shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends. Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts; smite the shepherd!" Yet so profound is this secret, that not one man on earth understood it. The chief students of a Scripture full of Christ are those who reject and slay that Christ!

We need not go back to Annas and Caiaphas; what Jew of to-day sees his Messiah in Jesus? "What can be the meaning," the writer of these pages asked a Rabbi, "of such words as these in the Old Testament, if Christ be not that meaning?" "Senseless words! They have *no* meaning!" was the reply. A secret? How far is it comprehended even of Christians to-day! So secret is this infinitude of divine wisdom and love,—dark with excess of light,—that nothing less than the omnipotence of an infinite Spirit can enable us to know. For "no man can say that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."

As abysmal a secret is the future of Christ the Son. When and how is He to come again? Like Saul, the Jews are journeying along in absolute unbelief. Is Jesus so to break upon them that like Saul, made by sight of Christ into Paul, they too in the agonies of their remorse, the ardors of their love, will storm the world, will compel it as by their irresistible faith and joy to believe? His name is still secret; the one thing we do know is, that as his successive revelations of Himself have heretofore been glorious beyond all human conception, so will it be of his yet more amazing future!

There is a something upon which we dare not gaze too steadily, it dazzles us so, in what is meant by Christ when He says of the saint in heaven: "I will write upon him my new name." "His name shall be in their foreheads." We know, in part, the before undreamed-of things which have come to men, the astounding revelations God has made of his inmost self in Christ, son of Mary, Saviour, Sacrifice, Sovereign. Can it be possible that there is to be some yet newer, now wholly unimagined disclosure of Himself, in the giving to us in heaven of a name still a secret to us? The sole flash of the as yet hidden glory therein is in the intimation, that it shall be a new revelation personal to these two—Christ and the individual disciple—since it is said: "To him that overcometh I will give a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." Even as God was made in his Son infinitely more than kings, prophets or desiring angels conceived of, so shall it be to us in heaven: some personal blessedness, some flavor rich and rare of that "new wine" at the eternal

banquet! It is still a secret, because its effulgence would blast us into blindness now. If it were but for this "glory *to be revealed* in us," of which all we know is that it is "an exceeding and eternal weight of glory," well may we cry out: "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!"

It would seem as if Christ clothes with something of the purple of his own secrecy the Samson, whose birth He comes to announce to Manoah and his wife. Moses we can understand, and Joshua; Gideon is not beyond our comprehension, and Jephthah; but this man Samson is among deliverers raised up of Heaven an anomaly and a wonder. We read in the story the most minute directions as to the coming son. His mother is to keep herself from wine and every unclean thing. Her offspring is to be a Nazarite from birth; never must his hair be cut. Surely here is to be some holy John, some vigorous Peter, some powerfully intellectual and ardent Paul. Yet see!

The first we hear of him, doubtless zealously watched and carefully trained by father and mother, often told the story of the announcement by an angel of his birth, is—what? Some astonishing victory, in the earliest bloom of his powerful manhood, over the cruel oppressors of his people? No, far from that! He sees a woman of Timnath, a daughter of the Philistines whom he is to destroy; and against the clear command of God, notwithstanding the protest of his astounded parents, his blind and passionate love—lust, rather—has its way. Rending on his path a young lion, he persists in going to and marrying her; his parents patiently going with him.

There is a wedding feast. Basing it upon the slain lion, the joyous bridegroom propounds a riddle to the guests; this much of shrewdness in the vigorous lover, that he makes thirty sheets and thirty changes of garments the reward of guessing and the penalty of failing to guess his conundrum. Threatened by her kinsfolk, his new wife weeps and pleads with her husband until he tells the solution. When she repeats it to the guests there is nothing else to be done, and Samson, slaying the men of Ashkelon, strips them of their garments and pays his forfeit.

Like the shallow giant he is, he abandons his wife in an ebb of aversion, but to return to her again in the flow of his purely animal affection. But she has completed her treachery by marrying another. In his wrath, and by means of foxes, he burns the harvests of the Philistines; and they in return burn the faithless wife and her father. Exasperated by this, Samson slays the Philistines with a great slaughter. Bound by his own people and given up to the Philistines, he breaks his bonds; and with the jawbone of an ass, lying nearest him of any weapon, the brutal and blundering Cyclops slaughters another thousand of his foes; God supplying his thirst afterward as by a miracle.

For twenty years he seems to have judged Israel, with the rude justice we can imagine of such a man; the Philistines still remaining masters of the land. The manner of magistrate he is may be estimated by this,—that at the end of that time he takes up with a harlot of Gaza. Knowing that he is laid in wait for, he wakes at midnight and escapes, bearing with him the gates of the town.

Delilah is the next woman into whose hands he falls. Sold by her to his foes, again and again does he break the bonds by which she has bound him, slumbering, like the burly brute he is, in contemptuous security. As to the other woman, so to this: weakly yielding to her importunity, he tells her the secret of his strength. How true is the story to this hairy wild beast of a man, when he is represented as saying to her as he awakes, "I will go out as at other times and shake myself." Alas, his hair is cut, the Lord is gone from him. Bound in fetters of brass, his eyes put out, he grinds in the prison-mill, the most pitiable of objects, reduced below the level of the brute. Brought to make sport for the Philistines into their idol temple, he drags down upon himself and them the crowded edifice, god and all, and perishes,—more slain by him in that act than during all his life before.

What strange story is here! This a champion of God, whose birth Christ himself comes to foretell? This giant of the iron sinew and shallow skull, of the feeble will and of the great effusive, overmastering heart which flashes now into a fury of love, then into a fury of hate,—is this Goliath of the Jews, this son of Anak more than of Abraham, this stupid fool of the first wicked woman who chances along, to stand among the chosen of God with saintly Abraham, sedate Joshua, austere Samuel, seraphic David; with Elijah, who walks with God, and is not, because God has taken him to intercourse nearer still? That this man should be the divinely selected avenger of his people, when he seems never to have had the first patriotic thought for his down-crushed country, the first conception of God as

his Master, and never lifts finger against the Philistines except in the gust—soon begun, soon over—of wrath against them for purely personal wrong! How strange that the Son of God, the Christ of Scripture, should raise up such a man as this! Think of it,—the Jesus of Bethlehem, of Bethesda, of Bethany; He who is gentleness itself and all purity, whose omnipotence clothes itself in the velvet of all patience and persuasiveness,—that Christ our Lord should employ a rude lout, such as this: one whom we can scarcely refrain from styling booby and idiot, whose brutal physical strength is his sole virtue,—how can we understand it? As a *nazir*, under vow never to cut his hair, he was regarded by himself and all as a living, walking altar—his hair untouched of scissors, even as an altar could not be touched by tool—a priest, altar, sacrifice, all in one; yet such a man!

We fail to understand Samson only so far as we fail to comprehend the complete Christ, whose crowns are more than one—that of thorns,—and whose aspects are manifold. Remember that "all things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made." It is He who maintains the planet turning noiselessly upon its pivots. Equally is it He who ruled when, perhaps, the universe was but an unimaginable sphere of vaporous heat; ordering out of that the chaos of all elements blended into boiling, hissing confusion; ruling out of that the monsters of primeval life, disporting themselves under gigantic forests, rending each other in the thick air. From Him are the gentle breezes of to-day, the moonlight silvering the sea. Are not all cataclysms from Him also,—the convulsions of other

ages tearing the globe asunder, the glaciers grinding down the mountains, the typhoon or cyclone, devastating storms of our own time,—who in the end is to consume the world He has made?

We paint Him as a shepherd among his lambs; but who creates, too, and controls vipers and adders in all their loathsome and deadly varieties, leopard and lion, the horrible cuttlefish of the seas, leviathan wallowing in bloody mire. He gives the spring, reddening with the roses into summer, ripening with the apples into autumn; and He sends winter howling across the world, pestilence sweeping nations to death. Tamerlane is from Him, and Genghis Khan, and whole lines of Neros. Men like Comte, of intellect brilliant and of razor-like sharpness, are among the implements of his hand; and He who sent the glaciers grinding their way around the planet employs also the Bolingbrokes, Humes, Darwins, than whom the icebergs are not more destitute of the religious sentiment. The horrible monstrosities, the Pipers and Pomeroys of our own days, whose rapture lay in the torturing to death of helpless children, are—why recoil from fact?—the agencies, however abnormal, of his ordering. "In very deed," He says of Pharaoh, "for this cause have I raised thee up for to show in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth." When the narrative shocks us by saying that the Lord was with Samson, that He gives to him His spirit, it was (says the straightforward Scripture) of the Lord for the destruction of the Philistines, although Samson is almost as ignorant of God as the foxes by which he fired the harvests of his foes.

When therefore, like a volley of rifle-balls, pesti-

lential germs invisible and death-dealing fly through the air, or a tornado unroofs your house; when a storm sinks your ship, or a locomotive crushes your child; when some brutal enemy treads down beneath his hoofs all you hold dearest, or Satan himself seems to be unchained against you,—whatever Samson-like force smites you,—keep steadily in mind Who permits it. "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily"; and shall any attribute of the Godhead, even those the most terrible, be lacking when He comes to do what the shuddering Scripture declares to be "his strange work"? Whatever He may be in addition, still rest your head upon his bosom, confident that forever and ever is He the Christ of the manger and the cross.

That Christ is the master of brute force is not an attitude of the Son of God which interests us merely in the abstract. What man who knows himself, knows not that there is much of the Samson in him also,—the yoking together within him as of an ox and a calf, as of stupid strength and silly weakness? Well may we seek to be controlled of our Master in our infantile feebleness, as in our headlong excess of vigor.

Far more pleasing, because in mastery of the brute force of which Samson is the type, is what the story here tells of Woman. How very little is said of her in the earlier Scriptures! After Eve, though many a man is named, there is for over two thousand years no allusion, except the very slightest, to the sex. How scanty then is the mention of Sarah. So far as the story tells, and though her husband is in full and frequent communion with God, she catches no glimpse of Him except as she listens and laughs within the tent. Abraham

pleads with God for Sodom, takes his son from the camp to offer him as a sacrifice, yet says seemingly nothing of this to the mother of the lad; it is no more *her* faith that is tried, than it is that of Hagar. In the ages following, the Rebekahs, Leahs, and Rachels are casually spoken of; but still is there no appearing of God to these, as to Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Gideon. Scarcely a syllable does He have to say to or of them. But the times are ripening now toward the day when—the first of all the world to know it—Mary is to be told of the coming at last, and by her, of the Messiah into the world; and for thirty years of his life on earth the daily, hourly, by far the chiefest and dearest companionship of the Son of God is with a woman,—his mother. *Is* he the Messiah? That is the question agitating the Jewish world after he has entered upon his ministry. To whom does He first announce that he is?

"I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ," the woman of Samaria said as she stood beside the well.

"I that speak unto thee am He," is the reply of Jesus. From the creation of the world the Messiah—who He would be, when He would come, and what He would say and do,—had been the supreme expectation, in a sense, of all races. Now the first in the world to know from his own lips that He is come, the first to see and hear Him as such, is this woman. She is the first of all the race to believe in Him as such. Can anything be more natural than that she leaves her water-pot, as she hastens away? She has forgotten it in this astounding event; she cannot burden her feet with it, as she, first of all the world to do so, speeds to bear the news

to others. There are to be many millions of missionaries of the Messiah; this woman is the first by whose eager effort others are led to seek and accept Him as such. Silent to the multitude upon the subject, speaking in guarded language to his own disciples in reference to it, this announcement to a woman is in the first year of his ministry. It is two, three years afterward before Peter acknowledges it, taught by the Father. To the woman Christ himself makes the announcement, and so long before! To whom but to a woman does Christ himself make known his rising from the dead? And here again is Woman the first of all to tell it to the world.

Taking the first step toward what is thus destined for her sex, it is not to Manoah but to his wife the angel of the Lord first appears, when the birth of Samson is to be promised. The husband, told it by his wife, entreats in prayer the return of the heavenly visitor. He does return; but yet again it is to the woman, "when" (it is carefully said) "her husband was not with her," and again is she the rapid messenger whose flying feet announce to another that Christ is come. Not even her name is left on record, but this is written as her memorial to all generations.

Observe, she is approached by the angel because she is the wife of one man and the mother of another. Search Scripture from beginning to end: with rarest exception the entire work, worth, weight of the woman is in reference to some other person, especially in reference to father, brother, husband, son. Evidently the wife, in the story before us, is more than the husband or than the son.

We spoke of Scripture; it is equally true of all history,—it is the woman who makes the man. In Kaulbach's cartoon of the Era of the Reformation scores of men stand forth as the authors of all civilization, while there is but one woman upon the canvas,—Elizabeth. Of all women she should not be there; having neither husband nor child she perished, so to speak, with herself. Glance up and down the cartoon,—it is the mother of the man who looks out at us through the eyes of Luther and Melancthon, of Dante, Columbus, Shakespeare, Newton, Kepler, every son of them all.

Take the story of Samson. His mother is "in the field" when the angel comes to her. Is there no hint here of a life of labor in the open air, from which Samson derives his physical strength? And why is the woman to keep herself so free from wine and all unclean things, except that she may be a fountain of blood pure and vigorous to her offspring? We saw how Jacob repeated at every turn the treacherous nature of his mother: did we know more of the wife of Manoah we could show her, doubtless, as reappearing in Samson continually.

For, alas! not to the good woman alone, but to the bad also, belongs supreme influence over men; especially over men of the virile nature of Samson and all heroes. Read how Hercules sits spinning at the feet of Omphale; and how he blunders along, displaying his vast strength purely at the whim and freak, now of one woman, then of another. Henry IV. of France, his mother Margaret on one side, Gabrielle d'Estrées on the other; Charles II. of England, and his vile companions; Solomon, his cohorts of wives and their idol-

atrous influence upon him, his latest darling more to him than his God,—these tell the same story, as we run up and down the annals of time.

"Give me but this battle, O God of Queen Clotilda!" cried Clovis in the crisis of the contest, "and I am thine!"—and winning the fight, the tears and entreaties of the woman are successful at last, and France is Christian. What youth in all the East so handsome, gifted of intellect, plunging with vigorous zest, now into philosophy, then into all depths of profligacy, as Augustine? And yet, "It is impossible God should not grant him to such tears as these," her pastor cries when Monica goes to him for counsel as to her son; and lo, the wild youth becomes the champion of Christianity!

In the case of Samson, it is but a blind stumbling from the white hands of one harlot into those of another. His mother might have held him to his mission, had not other women been too strong for her and for him. Here is an Agamemnon, a king of men in girth and brawn, born to be the deliverer of his country, set apart to it by solemn vows, whose herald is none other than the Son of God himself: and yet his entire life is but a bloody blundering, swayed from all noblest service and richest reward from God and man by the influence of wicked women.

"I am the son of thine handmaid!" David cries to the Lord; and yet how nearly is her influence, and his own career, destroyed by the charms of one woman. For evil and for good the power over the man of the woman: that is one thing we learn from the story of Samson. But who can help seeing that as her influence

grows purer, so it grows stronger, in our days. The revelation of Himself to the wife of Manoah is but the earliest in a series by which woman is being developed into a force for God, of which she little dreams. Note the changes, the astonishing advance of woman during the last few years, the enlarging scope and sweep of her work until it is embracing the world. No man was the father of Christ, but a woman was his mother: she is nearer akin to Him than man, if we may dare say it. And it is easy to measure the development of the woman under a closer companionship every day with the Son of God, by comparing the ardor, the loveliness, the patience, the undeniable—and the gladly yielded to—*power* over men and the world, of the woman who believes with the woman who does not. The man who believes not is but half a man; but the woman who believes not in the Son of God has not as yet begun to exist as a woman—since not till she loves her Lord has she learned to love at all.

A last thing is that, in this story, with Christ comes sacrifice. Some ninety years before, Gideon must needs bring to the Son of God tarrying with him, and out of scanty stores, the invariable offering of food, the flesh of a kid in a basket with unleavened cakes of flour, the broth in a pot. He intended it as food, but his guest commands him to put upon the rock the flesh and bread, pouring over it the broth. As he gazes astonished at this, the other puts forth his staff and touches the offering; fire bursts from the rock, consuming it, and in the act the angel departs. It is thus that Gideon perceives that this is the God to whom all sacrifice is made, and cries out for fear.

When Manoah proposes a like gift of food, the Lord does not disdain his gift: merely tells him instead, that the present must be an offering as in sacrifice; and patiently waits while the man and woman, joying in their unborn son, make ready the kid. But here is a marked advance upon what goes with the sacrifice of Gideon. The guest holds no staff, causes no fire to spring from the rock. He does, as the story runs, more "wondrously" than that. While Manoah and his wife looked on upon the burning sacrifice they had made, "when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, the angel of the Lord ascended in the flame of the altar." In the instance of Gideon, the Lord had acted as High-Priest; now, in and by the act of ascending in the flame of the sacrifice, He identifies himself with it as the sacrifice! There is violation here open and direct, as in the case of Gideon, of the law by which none but a Levite could offer sacrifice, — and he only upon an appointed altar, and in a set way. In these cases Christ anticipates Calvary, and, more than a thousand years beforehand, shows that He is himself both High-Priest and Sacrifice.

Not only that, — He allowed Gideon, allowed Manoah, to do that for which King Uzziah was smitten with white leprosy, even in the temple and in the act, and dies. That is, Gideon and Manoah are permitted to offer sacrifice, and thus to anticipate that of which all sacrifice by man or woman is but a type, — the presenting themselves living sacrifices to God, which is their reasonable service. Manoah's wife must sacrifice herself, by abstaining from this and that, in behalf of her unborn son. And that son, too! So far as there is

any record thereof, here is the one act of piety in an otherwise almost bestial life. "O Lord God," Samson prays—his arms about the pillars which sustain the temple of Dagon and its more than three thousand worshippers—"O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged" (there is that much of the old brutal self left) "of the Philistines for my two eyes!" "Let me die," he exclaims, "with the Philistines!" And bowing himself with all his might, he creates at once priest, altar, sacrifice, and sepulchre in the crash which follows: self-sacrifice the noblest act of his life, and the fitting end of a story which began with the priesthood and sacrifice of the Son of God!

VIII.

(B. C. 595.—Ezekiel i.)

CHRIST THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD.

We all remember how completely those within Paris, during its siege, were cut off from the world without: weeks passing, at times, during which the Parisians would not have been in more profound ignorance of what was occurring outside if they had been citizens of Saturn or Sirius. Who does not recall, also, the way in which the difficulty was overcome at last? A number of *The Times* would be carefully photographed in London, upon a scrap of thin paper an inch or two square. This precious document, sealed within a quill, would be fastened beneath the wing of a pigeon obtained from Paris, and inside of an hour or so *The Times*, thus brought within the walls, would appear on every bulletin-board of the Paris journals, restored to its original size. What had seemed to be merely a bit of blurred paper, not to be read except by a microscope, would prove thus to be a great European daily,—editorials, items of news from the world over, advertisements, intelligence of every kind, all there, not a line nor a letter lacking.

Take, now, this first chapter of Ezekiel. Like the "verily, verily" of Christ, when He uttered anything

of supreme importance, this Scripture is repeated to the prophet, and to us, in the tenth chapter. The duplication only doubles the complexity of the first record; a bewildering complication, seemingly, which fairly dazzles and dazes the brain, all the more the longer it is examined, and from excess of darkness as the sun dazzles from excess of light. And yet, by using the simplest means, what was but a blur of perplexed paper unfolds to us its meaning, not a line or a letter lacking, and so clearly that a child can understand. The bewildering impression of this Scripture upon first and too hasty an examination is, in fact, deliberately intended. The intricate machinery is all the better symbol of Providence, just because Providence itself seems to us, until understood, but a mass and wild mixture of matters impossible to understand.

As briefly and yet clearly as possible, let us place ourselves beside Ezekiel, and see what is meant by the Vision. Who knows but that the explanation may be borne by the dove which descended upon Jesus to some sorrowing soul, besieged and cut off from what it so ardently desires to know?

Some six hundred years before the birth of Christ, Ezekiel, the priest, is among the Hebrew captives in Babylon. He has a vision. Hurled prostrate to the earth as he was by the coming of the vision, let us carefully observe that it is "the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord"; and by nothing but that is he—like Saul on his way to Damascus, like John in Patmos, like Daniel afterward—thus prostrated. "And when I saw it, I fell upon my face," says Ezekiel; "and I heard a voice of One that spake.

And he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee. And the spirit entered into me when He spake unto me, and set me upon my feet that I heard Him that spake unto me." Not very long after the vision of which we are to speak, the Lord says to Ezekiel: "Arise, go forth into the plain, and I will there talk with thee. Then I arose and went forth into the plain; and, behold, the glory of the Lord stood there, as the glory which I saw by the river Chebar; and I fell on my face. Then the spirit entered into me, and set me upon my feet, and spake with me."

Mark here two things:

First, if we study the appearances of the Son of God to men in the Old as in the New Testament times, we find that He almost invariably draws the man with whom He is to speak away from other men, and into the open air. As He took Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, the parents of Samson, and Ezekiel, apart to themselves, so was it when He abode upon earth, after his birth of Mary. Not in Jerusalem any more than in Babylon, not in the hamlet, nor assemblage of men, nor in the temple; but so far as it was possible to his mission He leads those with whom He would converse to the mountain slopes, along the highways, upon the sea and along its shores, out on the plain or through the fields of corn,—anywhere, so it is apart from the crowd and in the open air. Is it because the largeness of his nature, the magnitude of what He says and does, require it; or because the freedom and purity of the blue skies are more congenial to Him?

The second thing to be noted is, that the Lord will

not converse with any man until that man stands up from worship and upon his own firm feet. The man, whoever it is, must be in full possession of his body and mind, of himself in every sense, when his Master and Friend deals with him. His God respects him. With all due humility, fear and reverence for his Lord, the man so favored must respect himself, must have such calm mastership of himself as fully to understand, remember, record, and afterward act upon all that takes place between himself and his God.

When it is said that it is upon a river that Ezekiel, like Daniel afterward, beholds the vision, let us remember that throughout Scripture, as in all Oriental imagery, a river signifies the flowing by of the race, the unceasing current of the generations of men. Thus the harbor of Rome is represented as enthroned upon "many waters." "The waters," it is afterward explained, "are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues." God it is "which stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people." "I heard," says John in his visions of heaven, and of the songs there of praise, "I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters." Therefore it is beside a great river that Ezekiel beholds this magnificent symbol of the Providence of God, whose whole reference is to the Race—in that broad stream across the globe, which, originating in a myriad of separate springs among glens and mountains, pours at last into the never-overflowing Ocean of Eternity.

THE SUBLIME SYMBOL OF PROVIDENCE.

Drawing nearer to the Emblem of Providence seen in vision upon the river Chebar by the prophet, we observe how its bewildering complexity is made up of the mutual interworking of many separate objects. Where the tangle of things seems so hopeless, let us try, as Christ did with the confused multitude, to rank these things into classes:

(1) *Inanimate nature.* This is represented, first, by a "whirlwind out of the north," from which rush forth all storms. Remembering that the Almighty "rideth upon the wings of the wind," we recall, too, how it is by the winds that many of the plagues upon Egypt are brought or taken away, that it is by these that the Red Sea is divided for the passage of the Israelites, and the quails brought for their eating. The calm mastery of Christ over the winds and waves, when he awakes from his sleep in the tossing boat, is but an illustration of His Providence and power over these.

"A great cloud" is part of the symbol; and the clouds "are the dust of His feet" in too many of His goings and His uses to need to be further specified. "A fire infolding itself"—that is, self-fed like the sun—is mentioned; and in how many ways this element "fulfils the will" of God, we know.

To a greater degree than ever before, we are coming to understand why lightning is enumerated as part of the machinery of his Providence, in millionfold addition to God's former uses of it upon Sinai and in striking the rebels dead. Surely there is a prophecy of uses of this element never imagined till now, when

Scripture speaks of the lightnings as the messengers of the Almighty, going, coming, saying "Here we are!"

When the firmament is added to the list, we agree that there is signified whatever of inanimate nature is embraced therein, if we add "amber." This stands here as a type and specimen of color of all shades, of all uses in the purposes of heaven. How many are these: the gray and gold of morning; the saffron, the crimson of evening; the rush of red to the brow and cheek—the signal flag now of shame, then of wrath, often of love. Was it not the blending of coral and bronze in the lip and cheek of Cleopatra which changed, through Mark Antony, the face of the world; the "black but comely" of the heathen queens of Solomon, which outdid the ivory and silver and gold of the temple and banished the Almighty?

But it is the sevenfold assurance of all color in the rainbow that roofs the race beneath the gracious covenant, which enrings, so to speak, and binds and blends God and ourselves within His loving purpose in Christ.

Very striking is the perpetual appearance, in the vision, of "wheels." With all that is meant thereby, nothing can be more descriptive than these of the workings of Providence. What is the globe but a sphere turning wheel-like upon its axis and about the higher centre of the sun? The revolution of a wheel is repeated in the tides and seasons; in the ascending and descending of the sap in all plants; in the down-pour, and the ascent by evaporation, of all water; in storms revolving by circles from equator to pole, and back again; in the "unstable equilibrium" of electricity; in the rise and fall, rolling in upon us and rolling away,

of epidemics and all panics; in the migration and return of birds; in the birth, growth, decline of life in all that live. Is it not so of nations, which like so many wheels rise, roll, decline; of the periods alike of locusts and of war; of revival and reaction in religion; of the origin, increase, and ending of each dispensation,—our age learning that Brahminism, Buddhism, Mohammedanism, and every other religion has its part among the complexity of wheels upon which moves the Providence of God? In an age when machinery of all kinds was almost wholly unknown, it was inspiration—was it not?—which gave to the wheel that essential part in providence which the multitudinous machinery of our own times makes so familiar to us.

Yes, here is a principal motor in the processes over which God presides—"wheels." How does the prophet dwell upon these! There are wheels rolling, halting, slackening, turning; "wheels within wheels"—that is, as the Hebrew has it, a circle revolving within and at right angles to another; wheels sparkling, it is said, with unsleeping eyes, vivid with lamps and lightning flashes, made living things by an indwelling Spirit.

Therefore is it that the vast and intricate system of Providence is represented as moving, halting, turning, quickening its speed hither and thither, according to the cry to it, "O wheel!" from Him who sits upon it as upon a chariot and guides and controls it toward His own sublime and sufficient ends. The Hebrews pursued by the Egyptians are about being crushed by the wheels of their chariots at the Red Sea, when to the cry from above—unheard by them—"O wheel!" those chariot wheels fall, we read, from their axles, their

drivers are whelmed by the waves, the Israelites escape. How often afterward is Israel upon the very edge of being ground to dust under the wheels, now of this enemy, then of that; in the very moment of bitterest extremity "a going" is heard among the mulberry trees, a rumor from far away smites upon the ears of the foe, a confused uproar sounds upon the air as of an approaching army: in some way the command comes as from above the vast machinery of Providence, "O wheel!"—and the advancing tires of iron are struck with panic, are reversed, fly as under the pressure of a new and irresistible force, and the people of God are saved! Your wife or your child is caught, it may be, among the whirling cogs of accident, disease, impending death in some form,—another turn of the shaft and all is over: when "O wheel!" is whispered unheard by you, the machinery is halted, is swerved as by a hair's breadth aside, and your beloved one escapes!

"Their rings," groans Ezekiel, gazing upon the wheels, "are so high they are dreadful." That is, the sweep and scope, the entire measure and movement of the wheels upon which Providence journeys are so vast as to terrify. How often we think the same. We cast, for instance, our bread upon the waters, and it is so long in coming back! Giving our very soul to the training—of a child, it may be, or of a church—it is so long, long before there is any appreciable result. We are laid aside by sickness, and the wheel of returning health turns so slowly we cannot see that it turns at all. It is a little investment we have made, a humble enterprise we have begun,—when will the returns begin to come in? Going into some business in early youth,

giving to it every energy we possess, leaving no honorable effort untried, the hair begins to whiten, the strength to fail, the heart of hope to cease its beating, the wheel of our fortune sweeps through such vast spaces,—will it never, never come back again, returning a little something, at least, of all we have put into our venture?

"O God!" we cry, weary of waiting, "if Thou art God, we are not! Thou art eternal: to Thee all duration is an unchanging now; Thou seest the end from the beginning; Thou sittest upon the vast circuit of things, and knowest nothing of anxiety or impatience. But we, O Lord, the insects of an hour, what do we know? Thrice a day must food come back to us; every night sleep must return to our weariness; this money we are counting upon is essential to us, when (yea, before) it is due: yet to us it seems as if the wheels stand still! So exhausted are we of the exceeding slowness of return in anything, everything, that we long for the coming hour when the dust shall return to dust as it was, the spirit to God who gave it: but, alas! when will that hour arrive? Like the sick man tossing through the sleepless hours of a night of agony, eager for the small relief of the dawn, to whom the wheels of his watch seem to stand still; like the slave in the field, old and exhausted with toil, to whom it is as if the sun never would set,—the wheels, Lord, are so vast, so slow! Who denies the exquisite adjustment of wheel to wheel in the machinery of providence? Who but acknowledges their irresistible force, working toward grandest results in the end? Yet, O Lord, "their rings are so high they are dreadful!"

We may get at some clearer idea of their dimensions—some consolation, too—by comparing the diameter of the wheels of providence, as Ezekiel understood it, and what we have come to know to be the fact. Palestine was all the world to the prophet; yet was it but an insignificant spot, some hundred and fifty miles long by fifty broad. Assyria added thereto: this was the earth to Ezekiel. What did he know of the remaining portions of the old world? Or of this new world in which we dwell, and which is revolutionizing the race? Not the faintest idea had he of Earth as a planet, with its twenty-five thousand miles of circumference, making every year its orbit of five hundred and fifty millions of miles about the Sun. As to a Solar System of like, yet larger, planets about the sun, as to a universe of eighteen millions of suns within gaze,—the mind of the strongest man of those times could not have taken in such a thought.

Or—to speak of something larger than mere size—Ezekiel knew of the Hebrew Church: what did he know of that Church of the crucified Christ, which sweeps into itself in the end the entire race? Very dim was the conception even of a prophet, in his days, of an eternal existence after death. And we? Our knowledge of the inconceivable diameters of God's universe has aided us to comprehend the fact that, after death, its Maker throws open that universe to the use and enjoyment of the great multitude of his children which no man can number, and that it shall be theirs as long as God himself shall exist.

If Ezekiel said it, with how much more meaning may we say it of the wheels of providence: "Their

rings are so high they are dreadful!" But surely we should be all the better able to endure the vast sweep, the seemingly slow return to us of these, since we know a thousand-fold more of the grandeur of our human nature than did any prophet. We stand upon the mountain levels of a so much broader, loftier, longer enduring condition of things, that we should and may adjust ourselves thereto.

But never can we have peace, so long as our knowledge is limited to the wheels. So scientific may we come to be, as in the end to understand every wheel in nature and in providence as well as a watchmaker does those of his watch: what do I gather from that? Merely this, that I am an insect in comparison with the machinery; an insect, animalcule, so small, so microscopic as that I am nothing and less than nothing to it. The wheels may catch and crush a myriad of such caterpillars as myself upon their iron rails, and who knows or cares? Not until I know Who it is that is enthroned upon the machinery of providence, do I begin so to understand Providence as to be at peace.

(II.) Another class of agents in the interworking of providence is symbolized to the prophet by the lion, the ox, the eagle. These, signifying all courage, strength, energy, and audacity, are representatives of the animal but unintelligent race of creatures, not one of which but is made and used in accomplishing some sufficient end in the providence of Heaven. For this is everything that walks or flies, that creeps or swims: down to the ravens feeding the prophet; the hornet expelling whole tribes from their soil; the sparrows telling of trust, as the ants of industry; the locusts, grasshoppers,

frogs, flies and lice devastating Egypt. Therefore is it that the Psalmist calls upon "beasts and all cattle, creeping things and flying fowl," to take their part in the universal orchestra of praise to God. They do praise Him, by such service that not a living thing could be lacking from air, earth, water, or the realms explored only by the microscope, without serious disturbance—defeat, possibly—of the aims of the Almighty Maker.

In addition to these "wings," are enumerated "faces" and "feet." How significant is it when it is said that the feet sparkled "like burnished brass": for what the Hebrew means, is the glitter of axles made white-hot and radiant by swift and unceasing speed; feet aflame, that is, from their haste in the service of Providence. Could anything set forth more vividly than this the urgent uses by God, in his rule over us, of all means and instrumentalities?

(III.) It is well worth observing,—the part assigned to man in this vision of Providence. Of all faces, that of man is most conspicuous; beneath all wings there is "the likeness of the hands of a man," while the one complete impression made by the symbol, with all its varied and complicated machinery, is (we read, and taking it as a whole) "the likeness of a man." Since the whole was made for man, this follows as matter of course. That, next to God, man is the chief agent needs no proof. The differences between the most civilized and most uncivilized parts of the world are due to men.

It is the same of religion. It needs no mention of the various ways in and by which they work, for it to

be asserted that, as the existence on earth of religion, so its continuance and spread is by the hearts and hands of men; nor is it necessary to prove that God works by Lot as by Abraham, by Esau as by Jacob, by Pharaoh as by Moses, by Nebuchadnezzar as by Daniel; by Pilate, Herod, Caiaphas as by Peter, John, Paul. The doom of the race hangs dependent upon what men do or do not do, in things religious as in everything else. And what can be more of a proof of the essential use of man than the fact that the Maker of all, and He who gave himself to death to that end, stands waiting upon what men will do, depends wholly upon them? While all thought, feeling, power of acting are from Him, none the less is it true that the growth or arrest, the spread or decrease and death of the gospel, is left to men. However anxious and qualified angels may be, not the mightiest archangel, not the least cherub, is allowed to stir a wing, to whisper a syllable toward the conversion of the world. It is easy to conceive of a John or a Paul as intensely desirous to return to earth, easy to imagine them infinitely better fitted for work now than ever; yet are they as much out of the field as if they had been annihilated at death.

Let it be added that it is inconceivable a human being should exist, who is not in some way indispensable to the carrying out of the plans of God. It matters not if it be a leper, a man born bereft of every faculty, an African babe, an idiot: unless we can conceive of an infinitely wise Creator deliberately creating that for which He has no use, giving his own image to a creature without object or purpose in so doing, we cannot think this for an instant. When the disciples asked

Christ concerning the man born blind, He made a reply which covers the case of every human being from beginning to the end: he, she, it, was created, the life ordered as to its when, where, how, what, "that the works of God should be manifest in him."

The prophet describes the mighty symbol of God's providence as pervaded by what he styles "living creatures." These are fourfold as to wings, faces, feet and hands. They run and return as a flash of lightning—ascend, descend—move to the right, to the left—quicken their speed, halt, resume their energy. The entire machinery is pervaded by and is alive with them, even as they are alive, we read, by an indwelling Spirit. Whether it be inanimate nature, animate but unintelligent nature, or mankind in its every individual, that is meant,—the fact urged is that the complex whole of providence flows and overflows with life, vigorous, unslackening, tremendous life.

Mark, also, how the individual and independent life and action of each and every agent in the whole is so blended as, in a sense, to be lost in the absolute Oneness of that whole. For, speaking of the Spirit dwelling within it, the prophet sees that "Whithersoever the spirit was to go, thither was their spirit"—the "spirit of the wheels"—to go; "for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels," even as the inventor of the first locomotive, let us say, poured his very life into and through its machinery, and made it also as a living thing.

Not in silence does this vision of Providence live and move. "I heard," says the prophet, speaking of the living agents whose complicated interaction goes to

making up its machinery, "the noise of their wings, like the noise of great waters"—waters, as we have seen, representing all peoples—"as the voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech, as the noise of a host."

What Ezekiel hears is all sounds which go with the multitudinous agencies and processes of providence. He hears the voice of eloquence and song, the whispers of lovers, the chidings of anger, the brawling of the streets and the conversation at tables, the babbling of babes, the hoarse commands of generals in battle. To him come the clamors of business, the ring of hammer or anvil, the shriek of the steam-engine, the bell and whirr of the factory. The pealing organ is there, the rush of the railway train, the "lascivious pleasings of the lute," the bugle sounding to battle, the throbbing of drums, the chiming of church bells, the roar of cannon, the lispings of infantile prayers, the falling of broken chains, the consolings of kindness, the blasphemies of the blatant, the drip of the tears of widow and orphan, the pleadings of poverty, the groans of the dying, the wail of the new-born.

All sounds from the rolling providence of God are there, from the "Let there be light" of creation to the "Depart, ye cursed," or "Come, ye blessed," at the Judgment. The first promise of a Christ to save, and the "It is finished" of that Christ on the cross; the thunders of Sinai; the cry from Calvary; the song of angels announcing a Saviour born; the trump of the archangel wakening the dead,—no voice or murmur is lost, as the providence of the Almighty moves upon its way. It is said by those who have ascended in balloons, that at a certain height every least sound upon

the earth is distinctly heard: and from creation all voices have gone up to God, recording themselves eternally upon—who knows what pages?—since "for every idle word men speak they shall be brought into account," when the Judgment is set and the books opened!

"The likeness," the prophet goes on to say, "of the firmament upon the heads of the living creatures was as the color of the terrible crystal, stretching forth over their heads above!" "The paved work of a sapphire stone" is the way in which the same firmament is described, as beneath the feet of that God of Israel whom Moses and the seventy Elders saw upon Sinai; "as it were the body of heaven in his clearness," it is added. The meaning is identical; and when it is said that the crystal of the firmament was "terrible," the precious meaning is that it was absolutely cloudless, lucid, so transparently clear that whatever was based upon it was distinctly beheld from below. "Above the firmament," adds the prophet, "was the likeness of

"A THRONE."

Yes, all the immense system of providence is but to bear up a throne. With its complex movement of rings, hands, feet, eyes, lightnings, lamps, clouds, whirlwinds, living creatures, wheels, it is merely a sublime chariot, of which this is the seat—this Throne!

Alas, it is empty! One would suppose so magnificent a throne would be worthy to be filled by some Being. No! A chariot so glorious, so amazing a combination of all diversity of agency and force, would need, we might think, a charioteer. But not at all.

How very many have come, and are coming, to that conclusion. Some can see merely the machinery. So vast, so admirably constructed is it, so astonishing are its parts, so inconceivable are its forces; its wheels so sweep from zenith to nadir, that no man can get above and beyond. There is nothing beyond! The machinery is sufficient in itself. Man is so made that anything beside the machinery is unknown and forever unknowable.

These are the "fit though few!" Millions there are who know and care nothing about science. But they get caught among the revolving cogs and shafts; they see their dearest ones in act of being mangled thereby, are being crushed themselves. They cannot halt the wheels; shall they cry to pitiless steel and iron? Though the combined strength of the race were banded, it would not avail to halt the descending trip-hammer; and though it were about to annihilate an Empire, it would not swerve the massive energies a hair's breadth. It is but machinery! It has always been in motion, always will be! What it is all for, who can guess? It has been grinding, possibly, from eternity; will grind for ever and ever: and what grist does it grind out? The ashes of dead roses and little babes, the dust of so many Assyrias, Romes; not a living thing but has its place in this treadmill, which never ceases; not one thing but, soon or late, is caught in its gear and killed. They say it has ground suns and stars to dust, and will grind itself to ashes some day. Surely it brings more misery than blessing. What it is all for, who can tell? Can any one say how it came to be—what object it serves?

O, empty throne! How many wild eyes have been lifted to it, how many despairing hands held out! Could the conjecturing of all ages, could the strongest imaginations of poets, the theorizings of philosophers, have stormed its ascent and looked and lived, we might know something. Perhaps it is filled, as India says, by three hundred millions of gods! Some say the Arch-Fiend finds there his seat,—shares it, at least, with some well-wishing but feeble power.

Certainly the description the prophet gives of the chariot is so true, apparently, that we may at least listen to what he has farther to say: "And above the firmament was the likeness of a throne, and upon the likeness of a throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it!" A man? "From the appearance of his loins, even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about." We know what was meant by the rainbow, springing its radiant arches in token of the covenant, over the altar of Noah. And here we read: "As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. And when I saw it I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of One that spoke." On the repetition of the same vision, in the tenth chapter, Ezekiel says that the glory was "the glory of the God of Israel!"

The ages have given us no other meaning to all this; no future can give us any other, confirmed as it is by all revelation by Christ of himself to men before and after,—than that this is none other, this man yet God,

than Jesus Christ anticipating his incarnation of Mary some six hundred years after. The Throne of providence is not empty; the charioteer holding its reins in hand is none other than Christ the Lord! Let me but know that, but know Him: and what care I to know more of the machinery by which He is riding on to conquest?

We observe this: there is an advance and recoil, a swerving to the left and to the right, descent, ascent of this symbol of Providence; but, in the end, its whole life and movement are said to be "straight forward!" From the beginning there has been, as all history shows, a rapid and steady advance. Whatever may seem to be the case yesterday or to-day, in providence the grand and irresistible movement is onward, ever onward! How astonishing it is, that those who reject our religion do not have the manliness to acknowledge that there is no such conception in philosophy or faith, apart from Christianity.

The supreme doctrine of the ancient faiths of India was that all things moved in vast but ever re-entering cycles, the sole result of which was *Nirvana*, or annihilation. As to the later religions, it was the same. As Saturn deposed and destroyed the yet older gods of earth and heaven, so was Jupiter and all Olympus to be overthrown in those coming after. When Alcibiades played midnight havoc among the images of the Athenian gods, he well knew that Socrates his tutor believed in them as little as he; and as Cicero said, no augur at an altar could look in the face of his assistant priest without laughing,—the gods were dead! Nothing was assumed more as a matter of course than that Ar-

cadia and the Golden Age lay irrecoverably lost in the ages which were fled. In Christianity, what is more thoroughly assumed than that the golden ages lie before us?

When Mohammedanism mourns, as it to-day does, its approaching doom at the hands of the Christian, the same is as true of every other false system. Mention one of them in any land on earth that is not perishing, by the confession of its own adherents,—and perishing before Christianity, as night perishes before the ascending sun.

Rachel stole the gods of Laban: and so do unbelievers steal from our tents that idea of "Progress,"—a god to them, but merely the path and direction in which our God lives and has His Being. Science makes no assertion of advance. It says not a syllable except of continuance, as from seed to seed again in unceasing circles. In fact, science asserts only the ultimate cooling of all suns; the final death, as in the moon, of all light, heat, life.

"He must increase," cried the Baptist; and his word was as true as when he said, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." "Unto us," declares Inspiration, "a child is born, a son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulder, and He shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace": is not the remainder of the prophecy as true, "Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end"? Very significantly is it added, "The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this": since there is nothing exists but is made and kept in

existence and controlled by the Lord—the Jehovah-Jesus—as an agent toward this one divine Event. The ancients were one in regarding Fortune as a goddess, but none the less a sorry jade at best; and who, rejoicing in her malignant caprice, was sure, however propitiated, to serve her votary some scurvy trick in the end. Therefore it is the poet sings:

> "Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel!
> Smile and we smile, the lords of our broad lands;
> Frown and we smile, the lords of our own hands;
> Thy wheel and thee we neither fear nor hate."

To us Fortune is none other than the Son of God, as He was seen by Ezekiel enthroned upon and Supreme Mover and Master of all. Out of love for us He has yielded his throne, that during the average life-time of one of us He might himself dwell among the machinery, as it were, of his own providence. What one of its lightnings did not smite Him? which of its many hands did not tear Him? which of its manifold cruel wheels did not redden itself in his blood? In our times of sorest distress, when we least understand the providences which so thwart and hurt us, let us remember that He must forever have a fellow-feeling with us in the worst that providence can do. Knowing this, surely it must reassure us to know that now He is no longer among the wheels, but above, and enthroned upon them, saying to us: "Lo! I am with you always," "The very hairs of your head are all numbered," "All things work together for good to them that love God!"

Here is enough for us to know: He who is en-

throned upon providence is none other than Christ Jesus our Lord. It is a chariot over which He has supreme control, to the accomplishment of His own divine ends. Is not the Son of God more the centre of all-seeing to-day than ever before? Is not the entire trend and direction of his providence, as in the past, toward one result? Yes, and the end and goal He has in view is the bringing of himself to us, to all, as Saviour and King!

"Gird Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O most Mighty, with Thy glory and Thy majesty. And in Thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and Thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things."

IX.

(B. C. 580.—Daniel iii.)

CHRIST AND THE WORLD-POWER.

Sometimes, beneath a spring freshet, the little brooks rise to the level of their banks and pass along with mimic roar and foam; and there are times when all rills, rivulets, streams so rise and pour their swollen waters into the Mississippi that it becomes a rolling sea instead, sweeping levees and plantations, villages and cities before it, as the tide obliterates the summer day's mounds made by children playing in the sea-shore sand. There are periods when the anger of men exhausts itself upon each other in petty satires, slanders, curses, blows; and then there are terrible eras when the wrath of years and of individuals gathers and darkens, until allied nations dash themselves in war upon opposing nations, and an Austerlitz, Waterloo or Gettysburg of savage slaughter is the result,—the harbored hate of a half century culminating in the bloody battle of a day.

So has it been with what we name authority, rule, government among men. In our own day we have seen the separate supremacy of scores of German States aggregated into one great German Empire, threatening with its combined millions of soldiers under one hand the peace of the world. Or, as on our own soil, other

scores of free and powerful States have massed themselves into one great Republic, dominating a hemisphere,—in time, perhaps, the entire planet.

Thus it was in the days of that wonderful drama recorded in the third chapter of the book of Daniel. By the slow accumulation of a thousand wars and revolutions, the individual rule of every State in the then world had passed into the hands of the king of that literally world-wide monarchy, the metropolis and capital of which was Babylon. By the same force which in a plant converges the dew and sunshine and sap, the winds and rains and growing of many months, into the consummate flower, so had this Babylonian Empire grown.

By command of Nebuchadnezzar and his counsellors it was ordered throughout the world for years before, that on a certain set time the authority, riches, discipline, luxury, and entire law and force of the Empire should come to a head in and be represented by a golden image, some ninety feet high, and nine feet broad, erected in the centre of the plain Dura near Babylon. As it took many months of travel across plain, mountain and sea from the remotest parts of the world, the necessary arrangements must have been made (as in the story of Ahasuerus and Esther) even years before. But the day arrives, when the chief topic of talk and thought among so many myriads of people of all lands and languages shall be consummated by the dedication of the image.

Departing not a particle from the narrative, let us try to place ourselves upon the spot and comprehend what is going on. The king had gathered together, from

the world over, "the princes, governors and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs and all the rulers of the provinces, and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up."

Observe, that this was purely a State Ceremonial. In order that the entire Empire might be represented, it is plain that none were permitted upon the ground except officials of state. As these were from every part of the world, the chosen men of all zones, of all latitudes and longitudes, were there. Every shade of complexion was there, from the white and fair-haired sons of Northern snows to the children of the sun in remotest Southern climes. Being a state occasion, every costume was there; and what Treasurer or Prince, Governor or President, would fail to array himself in his richest attire for such a day? The fabrics of all dyes, the furs or feathers of all regions, the ornaments of all patterns in gold and silver, the precious stones from all mines, must have made the immense plain like an immeasurable flower-garden in fullest bloom, and radiant under the sun as with drops of dew,—the brilliant colors, the glint of shifting light from diadem and spear-point, from armor of burnished metal and clustered peacock plumes and flowing robes, changing unceasingly in the unceasing movement of the multitude.

The life of Nebuchadnezzar had been one long and luxurious splendor, but to-day it has reached its climax. He sits upon a gorgeous throne at the base of the image, and lifted high. His principal officers of state and army, his favorite wives and slaves, are clus-

tered about him in radiant groups. And doubtless all earth has accumulated whatever is rarest, most priceless, most lovely and august in this central group, guarded on every side by the flower of the king's army in its richest trappings. While, nearly a hundred feet overhead, towers the image, upon which the best skill of Assyrian artists has exhausted itself, and whose golden material sparkles to every eye so as to be seen by those farthest away.

We understand little of this idol, if we do not know that really it was but an image and effigy of Nebuchadnezzar himself. For, as with the Roman emperors, this is the insanity of every man exalted to such position that he imagines himself more than human; and no Nero or Caligula so despicable but that his statue stands at every official station throughout the Empire, a god to be daily worshipped with incense and offering. A Christian standing before the bar of any Prefect of the Empire was tested by this: Would he, or would he not, sacrifice to the Emperor as to a god? It was for refusing to do this that Polycarp and many scores of thousands were martyred. Even philosophic Pliny writes to the Emperor that, though the Christians are faultless as citizens, they are justly slain if only for their incredible obstinacy in refusing to sacrifice. Caligula causes the heads of the marble gods everywhere to be smitten off, and his own to be substituted.

Really the multitude of officials, in this Assyrian instance, were brought together to worship the Empire, made palpable to all, and deified in the person of the king. Yet we fail of the deepest significance of this,

if we fail to remember that the prompting and controlling force is at last that once loftiest angel, and thereafter remorseless rival of God, that Satan of whom Christ continually spoke as the "Prince of this world," "the god of this world." Even as God is pleased to reveal himself in the person of his Son, so is this not the first time nor the last in which Satan too, under whatever mask, summons the world about him for worship. Were it not for his attempt to induce even the Son of God to worship him, this would seem incredible. Who can know so well as Satan, that God is eternally God? Eternally defeated, yet eternally striving against God, what can be said but that Satan is before the whole universe the Supreme Fool!

The better to comprehend this Babylonian event, let us consider one thing. Scripture teaches, that not even the angels understood the purpose of Christ in being born in Bethlehem. As little as any man living, did Satan comprehend the fact that Christ would suffer and die, and by his death become the Saviour of the world. "The Prince of this world cometh," Jesus said, the day before His arrest, of that and of all that was to follow thereupon, "and hath nothing in me." "This is your hour," He said to his murderers, "and the Power of darkness." "Now," said He, of his impending death, "is the judgment of this world; now shall the Prince of this world be cast out."

Cast out? "To this end was the Son of God manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." The apostate ones had some forebodings of this, since they cry out to Him in the first year of his ministry: "Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Je-

sus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God." It is "through death that He destroyed him that had the power of death—that is, the devil." And therefore He says, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me. This He spake signifying the death He should die." None the less does Satan persist, until by His death Christ ascends forever victorious over him. It must be because his is the realm of darkness, that Satan cannot see,—see how, in opposing Christ, he is but destroying himself.

Returning now to the plains of Dura, remember that this exaltation of himself by Satan in a golden image for the worship of men is many ages before the agonies of Gethsemane and Calvary. He did not comprehend Calvary. Is it possible he did not comprehend what was to follow upon this, his daring attempt upon the assembled world? That we shall see in a moment.

After the Babylonian aggregation of all nations into one, there was no other World-Power until the Roman. This also gathered all peoples into one iron grasp. This also set itself up against, and warred upon, the Son of God, in many a furious persecution. It too perished, like Assyria and Babylon, under the chariot-wheels of the coming kingdom of God. Then arises the Spanish Monarchy. Almost all the Old World was under its sceptre, or the terror of its sceptre; while the New World, under Charles and Philip, poured its gold into its treasuries. How in its turn it warred upon the Son of God, and to what nothingness it has been reduced in its turn, every child understands. After Spain, came the Empire of that Napoleon who was the incar-

nation of supreme selfishness, as devoid of religious principle (faculty, almost) as we can well imagine. To it came, in due time, its inevitable Waterloo.

The nearest since to Assyrian assemblage of all nations under one influence, if not under one flag, is the Great Britain of to-day, the America of to-morrow. With manifold imperfections in these, there is at least no open war upon Christ and his cause by these. May we not almost hope that under these World-Powers there is the gathering up of the reins of all rule into the hands, rather, of the Son of God? As to the America of the future, who knows? So far as mere soil goes, it may be limited to this continent. So far as revolutionizing forces are concerned, are not the armies of its ideas conquering the Old World also? But whose Empire is it? Men, whose sight is limited to their eyes, regard the political struggle for the possession of our Republic as merely a contention of parties: really it is the strife for supremacy in it, as of old and forever, of Christ and Satan.

Apart from government, there are other World-Powers typified to us by the Image in the plain of Dura. Did ever Mammon so appeal to men as here in our America? Let this evil spirit take the shape of the physical and mental enjoyment which prosperity brings, or the power it gives,—it is the same. Just now atheism is making its rush for the ascendency. Opinion? Fashion? Money? Party? Worldliness? Scientific Infallibility?—there is always the convergence, now into this shape, then into that, of the separate and chaotic powers of the god of this world. Babylon was divided into one hundred and twenty

provinces, the officials of which were commanded to worship the golden image. So are there to-day many provinces of thought and action; and it is the chief men, the officials, of these, that the anti-Christ of to-day summons to his worship. Let us observe the threefold force employed toward this, as in Babylon, so always.

I.—FEAR.

It would be a vast mistake to suppose that the fires of Nebuchadnezzar's furnace had gone out. Doubtless it was the foundry in which had been cast the image of gold. Convenient as the furnace was to the spot upon which the image stood, there were reasons why its fires should remain in readiness. Some ten years before this dedication, Nebuchadnezzar had stormed Jerusalem; captured Jehoiakim the king of Judea, and had transplanted the inhabitants in a body to Babylon. As we know, this final chastisement did for the Jews what scores of lesser punishments, during nigh a thousand years of alternate idolatry and vengeance on them for their worship of idols, had failed to accomplish: at last the Hebrews were cured, and forever, of at least that sin. It is easy to understand how heartily every exile must have hated all idols: this one in particular, since it was the symbol of that infernal power by which they had been crushed as never were a people crushed before, or since.

Now as the three Jews, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, had been, after a thorough training in the king's palace from boyhood, set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, it was impossible but that their horror of idolatry should be known. It was, then, with reference

to them that their enemies had arranged that the proclamation should be made: "Whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall, the same hour, be cast into the midst of a burning, fiery furnace." Out of all the world there represented, these—it could not but be well known—were the only opposers of the worship of the image. The furnace had sufficed to melt into due shape the image of gold: was there a kind of gold in these men which neither the fear of the furnace, nor the furnace itself heated sevenfold beyond that, could melt? Here was the test.

For some reason, well worth inquiring into if time and space allowed, fear seems not to be the agent it once was to try the souls of men. Of all forms of fear the threat, the application, of fire has always been most terrible. In our days not only have the fires of, say, the Inquisition gone out, but fear itself does not threaten men as it used to do. Compulsion is brought to bear upon us to compel us to our knees before this idol or that, to-day; but it does not assume the shape of intimidation—unless indeed it be, as with the young especially, a fear of ridicule and of comment. Not even children tremble, these days. Neither rod nor church-yard ghost has a trace of its old-time terror.

Are men attaining to a manhood which defies fear? Is the armory of its weapons exhausted? Fear hath torment. Perfect love casteth out fear. They tell us that the Gulf-stream is either so changing its course about our globe, or so deepening, widening, growing warmer, that the elephant will find the luxuriance of the tropics at the Pole again, as once before: and can it be that such love is setting in toward men, from the

Fountain of all love, as that fear is perishing out from before it? People love their children more than in the days when, as Luther says, a school-boy was beaten at least seventeen times a day. Do men love each other more? justice and truth more? There is more felt and done for the miserable: do men love God more? However it be, fear as a force is so dwindling we need not dwell upon it here. Let us consider rather the power of

II.—PERSUASION.

In our story this influence takes the form of music. We know how even the aged and the lame, the sick and the sorrowful, are swept by the power of music, in spite of themselves, into the mazes of the dance—all the more so, if those by whom they are surrounded yield to the infection; and large numbers at a time of men and women abandon themselves to waltz or quadrille, as the insects of a summer's day to the evening zephyrs. More than that, who so cowardly but will be hurried into the jaws of death upon the battle-field if the blast of the bugle, the shrillness of the fife and the rattle of the drum are in his ears? Apart from the multitude bearing him as one of a torrent into cannon's mouth, or upon the serried death of hand-to-hand fight, the music is more to him than multitude; a power pressing his inmost being, while that acts but upon the body.

This is the force which is applied to the assembly standing before the image of gold: "A herald cried aloud: To you it is commanded, O people, nations and languages, that at what time ye hear the sound of the

cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up." As if to ring into our very ears the tempest of orchestral force, it is repeated: "Therefore, at that time when all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery and all kinds of music, all the people, the nations and the languages fell down and worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up."

Assuredly! As well might the aspen leaves resist the wind, as well might the billows remain unaffected by the gale. What blows fall so powerfully upon the loitering feet as those which come to us through the mellowing medium of stretched skin, vibrating string, quivering symbol of melodious metal? What gust so urges the reluctant along as that which reaches us through the attuning convolutions of tube and spiral? Doubtless to modern ears it would make a harsh and horrible discord, well suited to the Infernal Power it praised. It was the music which moved the rude people of those days to the dance, to the shock of battle, which gave in its dirges a deeper grief to their mourning. There must have been hundreds of thousands present at the dedication, and scores of different languages were spoken, but here was a melodious speech addressing itself equally and alike to all. Like an inrolling sea of sound, the music lifted and bore toward the idol every man there, seemingly, body and soul.

However it may be as regards fear, Persuasion may be well said to be more powerful now than ever. And we know, whatever be the god of the hour, the mani-

fold forms of music which seek to prostrate us before that idol. Happy is he who stands against it, and for God, as did these Hebrews!

There was yet another influence which, then as now, had in it a stress of strength greater than that of flaming furnace or pealing melody. This was, and is, the force of

III.—AUTHORITY.

For, let it be again said, this was distinctively a state ceremony. It was an assemblage from over the world of "the princes, the governors and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs and all the rulers of the provinces,"—thrice is that repeated. The three Hebrews were there as officers of Government, having place assigned according to their rank as such, wearing whatever variety in the richness of their robes and turbans, the golden chains, possibly, and signet rings, which were the badges of their office. It was distinctively as the monarch of the world that Nebuchadnezzar was present. The image itself was but an embodiment in glittering metal of the august Empire. Hence to refuse, then and there, to worship the image was treason. To refuse was to resist Authority, the grandest exhibition of authority ever witnessed by the wondering world!

And there is many an idol since which has summoned authority to its aid. "If thou let this man go," the Sanhedrim hissed in the ears of hesitating Pilate, "thou art not Cæsar's friend!" And it was that which decided Pilate. Tiberius demanded that he should give Jesus to death, and against all justice

Pilate slew, at the bidding (so to speak) of the Roman Emperor himself, that king of the two who seemed for the moment to be the weakest. It was authority, Imperial authority, against which the Christians of the days of Diocletian had to stand. During thirty years of struggle, it was against authority—that of all-governing Spain—that Protestantism made its stand; even as it was against the authority of Rome that Luther and the Reformers made their battle.

If so, what authority is it which seeks to prostrate us to-day, and before what idol? There are gods—*dii minores gentium*—small ones, it is true, in whose behalf Society assumes to be supreme as authority. Many are the millions, even in our own day, who are forced to their knees by Church authority—Roman, Greek, Mormon; possibly by the frown, if not by the hand, of some smaller denomination. But authority has gone over from priest and pope to philosopher and *savant*. A Hartmann, a Schopenhauer declare this to be the worst of all possible worlds, and there be men who groan and sigh an assent thereto. A University professor declares that there is not a truly educated man alive who to-day believes in the Resurrection, and we exclaim: "Can that be so? We had not dreamed of such a thing! But then, surely he has made a study of the subject, and knows better than we!"

Did ever pope so settle a matter by his say so, as do men who deny the inspiration of Scripture, and stare with astonishment at those who dare hesitate upon the subject? An American invents a mouse-trap, and a German evolves out of his inner consciousness a hitherto unpatented Probation after death, and looks through

his clouds of tobacco-smoke with pitying contempt at us who really have not had time—the advance is so rapid—to know of the existence of such a thing. So of the immortality of the soul, or the being of God. It has been proved beyond all question that we are evolved from the apes; that the remains of men preceding Adam by myriads of years have been certainly found this time; that miracle is absurd, impossible; that Christianity is on the rapid decline: how many of such imperial rescripts appear in the printed page, the columns of our daily, from the lips of the lecturer! The coolness of the decree is wonderful, but not as wonderful as the sudden terror of those who are for an instant influenced by such assumption of authority.

The three Hebrews are not alone in being compelled to resist authority. Yet what of our allegiance to another God, even though He be for the moment not made glitteringly visible to our eyes in gold or—brass?

The matter is in this case brought to a speedy test. "There are certain Jews whom thou hast set" (the Chaldeans hasten to tell the king) "over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego: these men, O king, have not regarded thee; they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." Defied in the presence of the assembled world, the king commands, and the men are dragged before him.

Daniel is about eighteen years of age when he is brought among the Hebrew captives to Babylon. In addition to what seems to have been his admirable combination of all noblest qualities of body and intellect, of heart and soul, he is described as a

prince of "the king's seed." Because of rank and character he is, from the outset, the leading spirit among the Hebrews; and evidently it was he who had made these three companions of his what they were, being trained with them in the palace of the king. Heretofore they have stood firm, because closely associated with him. On the occasion of the dedication of the idol, Daniel is ill, or absent upon the business of the Empire in probably too distant a part of it to be present; possibly Nebuchadnezzar had so arranged it in his knowledge of Daniel's abhorrence of idolatry, and out of his deep reverence for him. In any case his absence is ordered as it is, that these his companions may be thoroughly tested, that God and men and themselves may know whether they can endure the severe trial, depending upon God and upon none other.

And now not altogether in vain had been the influence of Daniel upon Nebuchadnezzar. Twenty years before this, Daniel had done more than interpret to the king his dream: he had told him the dream itself. The Chaldeans were right in saying to their enraged monarch: "There is not a man upon the earth that can show the king's matter; therefore there is no king, lord nor ruler, that asked such things of any magician or astrologer or Chaldean; and it is a rare thing that the king requireth, and there is none other that can show it before the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh." And therefore it was that when Daniel does this, "Nebuchadnezzar"—Emperor of the earth as he is—"fell upon his face and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an obla-

tion and sweet odors unto him." "Of a truth it is," the king said to Daniel, "that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings," and hastens to make Daniel the greatest of his subjects.

Evidently he now recalls that these Jews are fellow-worshippers with his Prime Minister of this Supreme Divinity. "Is it true," he now demands, and more mildly than would otherwise have been the case, "O Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego? Do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery and dulcimer and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made,—well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?"

Why are the names of these three Hebrews mentioned eleven separate times in the brief account of their heroism? As there is a certain music in the mere reiteration of the names of the musical instruments, so is there a glory in the graving of the names of these men over and yet over again upon the walls of sacred history: even as this same Nebuchadnezzar saw to it that the cartoons containing his name, repeated a thousand-fold, should swarm upon the walls of Babylon.

Very significant is it that the arraigned traitors insist upon their treason by dropping the invariable "O king, live forever!" in their reply. There is here a conflict of kings, and they place beyond a doubt which of the two they propose to serve. "O Nebuchadnezzar," they reply to him, "we are not careful to answer

thee in this matter." Not that they know the result to them of the struggle of gods for the mastery. Rarely does God make known to his most faithful servant what He intends to do. He blesses Jacob wrestling with Him all night by Jabbok, yet tells him nothing of how He will save him from Esau, or whether He will save him at all. What intimation does He make to his disciples, as He stops the bier of the widow's son, that He will raise the dead to life? Or to the father of the dead girl, or to the sisters of the dead Lazarus? None at all in advance of the act! Not a syllable does He say to his disciples, before it takes place, of his Transfiguration upon the Mount, of his feeding the multitudes, of his quelling the tempest upon the lake. In this instance, as in all, his follower must

> "Plant his foot in air,
> To find it rock"—

must rest in God with an implicit trust which hardly cares to know what his Lord intends to do.

"If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up!" One thing they knew, and nothing beside: that they would not acknowledge any other god than the Lord. This towering image meant more than idols in general: it is the embodiment of the empire of Earth; all the forces of earth and hell are ranged in alliance with it. Yet is it less than nothing to them. To them there is but one living and true God.

There can be no hesitation on the part of the king, with the world looking on. The furnace is heated seven-fold before the multitude, now filled with a new and greater wonder. The mightiest men of his army seize upon the unresisting Hebrews. In their clothing as they stand, are they bound and cast into the central core of white heat. The far-flashing flames reach out hungry tongues, which touch and turn to ashes the executioners, venturing too near under the urgency of the king. The three men fall down bound in the midst of the furnace.

When Daniel was cast to the lions, we do not read that Darius was present to see the deed done. Why should Nebuchadnezzar halt a state ceremonial as august as this, and turn away to see for himself the execution of condemned criminals like these?

Let us cling closely to the narrative, that we may get at its exact import. Who of all there present is most concerned in what is to follow? Not the Hebrews. In the act of being cast into the furnace, their faith becomes assurance. Had the furnace been the bower of a summer garden, the masses of burning coals newly-blown roses, and fragrance in place of flame, they could not have been more at ease. The whiteness of the heat might have been snow, so far as the scorching of a hair is concerned. Of that there is a sufficiency of witnesses. "The princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors being gathered together, saw these men upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was a hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed nor the smell of fire had passed on them." The golden god had itself been

but as water under the fierceness of the fire; upon the men who defied that god, the fury of the flame had been as harmless as an evening breeze. They were not prepared—those Babylonians nor their sovereign—to comprehend the first doctrine of Christianity. More than half a thousand years must pass before they could grasp that,—the wisest people, though they were, in all the earth. But this rescue from fire they could understand, and did.

They could not comprehend the first doctrine of Christianity,—like many of our own day in that. The Christ of Christianity they could understand; in that too were they like the most ignorant of our own times, —like the babes upon our breast in that. For there is no certainty that the Hebrews beheld Him who walked with them in the ambrosial air of the furnace. For them it was not necessary: their faith had faltered not, although it was in a God whom they saw not, nor heard. Whether they saw Him who came among them, or not, to them was fulfilled the assurance made two centuries before by the prophet, and to every believer: "When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour!"

In fact, there is no assertion in the narrative that any other than the monarch beheld that which was the explanation of everything. Of all men alive Nebuchadnezzar was the man least likely to see what he saw, the man to whom that sight was most essential, the man least likely to pretend to see what he did not. Hardly had the Hebrews fallen down bound in the

midst of the burning fiery furnace before "Nebuchadnezzar the king," gazing most intently of all there into the fiery hell, "was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake and said unto his counsellors"—the seven who by Assyrian law were most closely associated with him as official advisers—"Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered, and said unto the king, True, O king! He answered and said: Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God!" And here is the first showing of himself by Christ to any of the race outside the Hebrew Church: his first showing, not his last!

Has it never struck you as strange, dear reader, that none of the Old Testament Church seemed to desire, much less make an effort, to make known their God and his revelation of himself to men? Although closely begirt by the heathen, although passionately devoted to their God, not Abraham nor Jacob, not Joseph in Egypt nor Moses, not Samuel nor ardent David, not Isaiah nor Daniel in Babylon seem to have thought of proclaiming to other men the God of their own wonderful history. It was because He had not as yet come, who is the Word of God. There are scores of prophecies, that to Him all the earth was to come. But He must be a babe in the manger first, must live his loving life, must be our perfect Example; above all He must die for men, before He can stand and say: "Go ye into all the world, preach the Gospel to every creature." Nor even then can his disciples go forth. By command they wait until that Spirit is

given, by whom alone we can behold and accept the Son of God as Redeemer and Lord!

Not a word had Daniel or his three associates said to an Assyrian, from Nebuchadnezzar down, concerning any Son of God—not a syllable in the way of leading them to that Messiah. But, lo! as soon as Nebuchadnezzar catches a glimpse within that fiery shrine of the Son of God, he turns missionary upon the spot. "Then Nebuchadnezzar spake and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who hath sent his angel and delivered his servants that trusted in Him, and have changed the king's word and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god except their own God. Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation and language, which speak anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill; because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort!"

God the Saviour! That is the aspect He presents to this man. Another decree comes forth from the monarch, addressed to the whole earth, when, ten years later, driven forth from his palace, he returns after seven years' humiliation among the beasts of the field. But this was the beginning of his decrees, this first sight of that Son of God whom it is impossible to see and yet remain silent.

Imagine, if we can, the aspect of all this upon the immeasurable multitude! The conversation in every language of earth upon this astounding revelation to men of the Son of God! What other topic of thought or speech, as the assembly returns homeward, scatter-

ing itself abroad over all the earth? Like the ocean lifted in clouds into the skies, blown over all the heavens, coming down again upon every spot in separate drops of rain the earth around, so are these the messengers and missionaries of Christ to the race. They were state officials, grouped together as such about the state idol; it is as officials of that vast state that they are made preachers to the world of the Son of God, to whom the world belongs. Say, that their tidings were imperfect to the last degree; say, that even this soon perished from the minds of men: none the less is it true, that here was one of the myriad events by which the world was being prepared, however slowly, for the coming of the Son of God.

Thus did Satan and Christ, Son of God and Son of man, meet as it were face to face, and upon a summit commanding the landscape of the entire earth. Thus, and not for the first nor for the last time, is the god of this world dashed down, and to hell again, in and by his boldest effort to possess the worship and the mastery of men. Always has it been thus; thus will it always be!

You see vast gangs of workmen toiling under an overseer at the work of cutting a road through the iron hills. For years there is incessant hewing and hammering, fragments of rock hurled high in the air to the roar of many an explosion. At last the noise ceases, the last echo dies from the air with the last wreath of smoke—workmen, overseers, are gone: the completed highway remains. So to the cry of "Cast ye up, cast ye up a way for our God!" the World-Powers, each in its turn, toil for each its own period at the allotted

work. Take the Napoleon dynasty as an instance. It, like Cyrus, was raised up to do its set task. Not more completely does the turmoil of quarrying, the smoke of great battles, pass from the skies, than does the Napoleon dynasty dwindle to a lad who perishes in an African jungle. The dynasty performs its work and passes away: the highway for the coming Sovereign remains! From the beginning, one after another, the Nimrod, the Pharaoh, the Alexander, the Xerxes, the Napoleon, utterly ceases: the Christ, for whom they have toiled, abides! Well is He styled, "The blessed and only Potentate, King of kings and Lord of lords!"

X.

(B. C. 534.—Daniel x. 4–19.)

CHRIST THE REVEALER.

Adam at the beginning, Daniel thirty-five hundred years afterward,—what two men reveal, by contrast the one with the other, the dealing of Creator with creature so well as these? The father of the race is in Eden: and Eden is a home which represents to us that which is the highest happiness possible to man from things without him, so far as God unassisted by man can construct and confer them. Daniel is in Babylon, the capital and metropolis of the then known world, with its wonderful walls, hanging gardens, parks, palaces, pleasures, the capstone and climax of all that man can do for himself by ages of labor, statesmanship, war, education in things outside himself. What of man himself? Adam is created full-grown, his Maker's highest ideal of one who has had no hand, for good or evil, in the making of himself. Daniel is immeasurably the superior of even unfallen Adam in this, that he is the outcome of ages of human struggle and experience, a self-made man; but a self-made man who has wrought upon himself in partnership with God,—the culmination of that partnership being, and before

he steps from life's loftiest summit into heaven, his personal companionship with Jesus Christ.

Let us run rapidly over his history. We read that God "rideth upon the wings of the wind." It would seem so in the case of the Hebrews. As the richly-earned result of a thousand years of alternate sin and punishment for sin, the wrath of the Almighty smites the land like a cyclone, prostrating city, temple, village, country in dust; seizing upon, lifting as into the air and bearing to Babylon, almost the entire population in a body; and leaving them there, the wreck of a ruined people.

One man, Daniel, thoroughly understands the matter. Chosen for his royal blood, and for his personal superiority, he is carefully trained in the palace of the king for future service. In addition to bodily drill and discipline, he is taught all the Chaldeans know,—and they know all that is to be known at that date. From his arrival in Babylon, and when about eighteen years old, he understands what is before him. Cutting himself off, as far as he can, from heathen luxury, he keeps himself so close to God, that when Nebuchadnezzar dreams, and forgets his dream, he is inspired so to tell both dream and interpretation that the king prostrates himself before him, and causes oblations to be made to him as to the one man living nearest God of all on earth. In addition, he makes the Hebrew youth ruler over the whole province of Babylon, the chief of its wise men, and enriches him.

Some thirty years afterward, Daniel interprets to the king another dream, relating to the temporary downfall of the monarch, which draws from the humbled

sovereign a proclamation to "all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth," in which he associates Daniel with Daniel's God in words of acknowledgment and praise.

During the next thirty years Daniel must have fallen into obscurity, so far as the service of the king is concerned. For when Belshazzar, the son of Nebuchadnezzar, is terrified during a feast by the writing upon the wall, his mother has to remind him of Daniel, as of a man whose very existence had been forgotten. Not even the letters of fire blazing upon the wall are a greater wonder than is this Master of the Wise Men, the one man in all the world who knows most of God, as he stands, an august figure, amid courtiers and concubines, among the overturned vessels of the desecrated Temple, in the centre of revelry suddenly made horror, and reads to the trembling monarch what is to himself the handwriting of his most intimate and familiar Friend.

With scorn he waves aside the scarlet robe, the chain of gold, the position of third ruler of the Empire,—there and then is he not already first? He reminds the son of the pride and punishment of his father. "Thou, his son, O Belshazzar" (he exclaims, dropping the courtly, "O king, live forever"), "hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knowest all this, but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of Heaven, ... the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, thou hast not glorified." Then follows the interpretation of the writing. Upon this ensues an explanation and interpretation clearer still,—in Darius, who that very night storms the city and slays the guilty king.

Darius must have been very fully informed concerning Daniel; for, placing a hundred and twenty princes over his world-wide dominion, and three presidents over these, Daniel is made the first of the three,—in a word, is Prime Minister of a realm which embraces the whole of the then known world. Almost immediately a conspiracy is formed, as the result of which Daniel is cast to the lions.

Three years after his rescue from these, he takes time from the cares of empire for a season of special prayer. Twenty years before, and during his days of obscurity, he had a sublime vision, in which the Son of man is brought before the Ancient of Days and invested with the dominion and kingdom of the whole earth,—a rule which was to endure forever. Now he devotes himself, with three weeks of fasting, to a period of supplication, in which he endeavors to draw nearer to God than ever. This Son of man whom he has seen in vision, to whom belongs the empire forever of all the world,—can he not come to know more of Him?

The Jewish captive is now ninety years old. As we gather from the story, he is a man of magnificent health and personal appearance. In addition to his long study of all that human science had to teach, he is thoroughly experienced in the ways of God and man. Kings, conspirators, and lions have but established his faith. By the acknowledgment of his worst foes, no occasion against him, no error nor fault in him, can be found except his persistent praying. So far as actual rule goes, he is governor, next to God and to Darius, of the civilized world.

He lacks but one thing. His rolls of Scripture con-

tain perpetual promise of a Messiah who is to come. He strives to attain to clearer knowledge before he dies, of that Messiah; strives, and beyond his utmost hope succeeds.

Observe two matters here. As he writes out the story of his intercourse, first with Gabriel, and then with the Son of God, it is but natural to suppose that he makes this—especially when among the Wise Men, his associates—a subject of frequent mention. As the garrulity of extreme age comes on, it may have made, as the most wonderful event of his life, the one subject upon which he loves most to speak. How could his words and writings have failed to make the deepest impression upon men whose chiefest desire was to know, and to know concerning matters of that kind?

Note this, too: that Bethlehem was not more than five hundred miles north-west from what was left, five hundred and thirty years later, of Babylon. It is reasonable to believe that it was tradition from Daniel direct, which at that date led the three Wise Men to Judea, asking: "Where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East, and are come to worship Him."

As to the star. Daniel must have often studied the prophecy, among his rolls, of Balaam: "I shall see Him, but not now; I shall behold Him, but not nigh; there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel,"—and this star it is for which the Wise Men watched and waited. Balaam used the Hebrew word, *kobab*, signifying a permanent star; since it seems to the Wise Men to move, they style it *aster* instead, the Greek for a luminous meteor. Like

the Wise Men, Balaam is wholly separate from the Jews—himself a Chaldean, most likely. Observe, too, that the coming Son of God is made known to Daniel distinctively as a glorious King. Evidently, then, it is from Daniel that the Magi derive that impulse which leads them at last to the Babe in the Manger.*

But four or six generations have passed between Daniel and these men, who have learned from him enough about the Son of God to present to Him, when found, gold as the tribute of a subject to a sovereign, myrrh and frankincense as to one who is also an object of worship,—that is, a God. In their worship is found the first-fruits of "the Gentiles" who are "to come to his light," the first of a long line of kings who are to come from every land to "the brightness of his rising."

It is more than a star which attracts Daniel to his Lord. "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him," says Christ. Doubtless to him as to another aged saint, Simeon, "it is revealed by the Holy Ghost that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ." To him, as to Simeon, it is given that he may be able to say: "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, a Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the Glory of thy people Israel."

For three weeks Daniel devotes himself to prayer and fasting. Like Ezekiel beside Chebar, he is beside

* Since writing the above, we have seen an emphatic opinion of Prof. Delitzsch that the term "Magi," or "Wise Men," is of Babylonian origin.

that symbol of the rolling along of the generations of men, a river—the great river Hiddekel—when to him also is revealed the Son of God, the Saviour of the world.

As in the instance of Jacob, of Joshua, of Gideon, of the wife of Manoah, of Ezekiel,—as is the case of every one from beginning to end when favored with his closest communion with Christ,—Daniel is alone when Jesus comes to him. "The men that were with me," he records, "saw not the vision; but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves." Yes, like Saul upon his way to Damascus, and as to John in Patmos, Daniel is alone when his Lord arrives. What place is there for a third?

On a previous occasion Daniel is visited by a celestial messenger, who tells him unasked that he is Gabriel, and that he is sent to him of God to tell him of things yet to be. There stood by Daniel, once after that, one bearing "the appearance of a man" whom he hears say to Gabriel: "Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision." That is, there is here no possible mistaking of a mere angel for Him who is the Lord of angels. As when the Son of God visited Abraham accompanied by two angels, so in every instance such distinction is made that Christ remains separate and pre-eminent, God yet man, the supreme object of worship to angels as to men.

In the Theophany before us, Daniel sees "a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz. His body also was like beryl, his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in color to

polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude." In many respects this is the aspect of Christ to John in Patmos. As John fell prostrate at the feet of Christ, so now "I Daniel alone saw the vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength. Yet I heard the voice of his words. Then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face to the ground."

In the experience of Christians of all lands and ages, it is in the depth of almost annihilating trouble that the Lord draws nearest. Even as the hour of death is that in which He comes in all his glory, and to dwell with us forever, so it is when we are fallen deep down, and yet down, into such nearness to death as that almost nothing is left of us, that the Son of man draws nearest.

But, while that is true, there is to Daniel when Christ arrives neither place nor time for sleep and stupor. The Son of man, here as always, will have nothing less than the man in the full possession of every faculty. "And behold! a hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands." Nor will this attitude serve. There must be all humility and reverence, but there must be also all manliness and clearness of comprehension. "And He said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright. And when He had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling." The Hebrew captive had faced the lions without a fear, no terror had touched him when it was before Nebuchadnezzar he stood or Belshazzar. When Gabriel

comes to him, there is no such effect of fear upon him as this.

Jesus has but to say to the multitude come to arrest him, I am He, and "they go backward and fall to the ground." It is plain that Pilate, even in the plenitude of his power, writhes, Roman as he is, before the Son of God into a half-score of affrighted devices to let him go. "What have we to do with thee, Jesus thou Son of God? Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" is the cry of the evil spirits, retreating upon the mere appearance of Christ, without waiting for a word from him which shall cast them out. If a devil knows the Son of God, as it always did, shall not this man who has served him for nigh a century understand who this is that now comes to him in visible form? "And when He had spoken such words unto me," Daniel adds, "I set my face toward the ground, and I became dumb."

When the disciples see Jesus walking upon the water, and they cry out with fear, He says to them, "It is I, be not afraid." "Fear not," He says to John lying at his feet in Patmos. He is the same here. The heavenly Visitor said, as to Gideon: "Fear not, peace be unto thee; be strong, yea, be strong. And when He had spoken unto me I was strengthened, and said, Let my Lord speak, for Thou hast strengthened me."

But let us note here

CHRIST'S LAW OF PERSONAL CONTACT.

In almost every instance, when walking among men nearly six hundred years after this, the Redeemer touches those whom He heals. Is it Peter's wife's mo-

ther, prostrate with a fever? The story reads that He touched "her hand": was it not upon where the blood told of its fierce beat—upon the pulse—that his hand was laid to still what was to him but as a lesser storm upon the sea? When the dumb are to be made to speak, the deaf to hear, it is the tongue He touches, it is into the ears his fingers are placed. He must lay his hand upon the woman, if she is to stand upright and as erect from her eighteen years of crouching earthward as in her blooming maidenhood. He catches Peter when sinking in the water, He lifts with his loving hand the dead damsel to life, and He touches the bier bearing the widow's son to the grave. In open violation of all Hebrew law, He lays his healing hand upon the man who was "full of leprosy." "He laid his hands upon every one of them," is written of the sick brought to Him.

So in this instance. It was "a hand which touched me," when Daniel lay upon the earth. When he is dumb, "one like the similitude of the sons of men touched my lips." Again when Daniel exclaims: "O my Lord, I have retained no strength. For how can the servant of this my Lord talk with this my Lord, for as for me, straightway there remained no strength in me, neither is there breath left in me?" . . . . . "Then there came and touched me One like the appearance of a man, and He strengthened me."

How instinctive the yearning of love to touch and to be touched! The interlinking of the hands of children, and of lovers,—it is as natural as the contact of the lips; and that is as natural as thirst to water. It was the duty and joy of the one who writes this to visit

upon a certain occasion a group of five men who had lain, although innocent of all wrong, in a dungeon for half a year, cut off from light, fire and—worst privation of all—human sympathy. Although utter strangers, the pitiful eagerness of their outstretched hands for the hand held out to them, and as often a day as possible, in the thick of foes, never can it be forgotten!

The coming close, coming yet closer, coming so close as that He can touch and be touched,—that is the coming to us of God in flesh. "Because I have called and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded,"—because no man could come nearer or reach out a more cordial hand than his,—therefore is it that, love's utmost effort rejected, there follows that most terrible of all threatenings: "I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh." Made a millionfold dearer to us by those marks upon its palm, surely his soul is turned to stone who can refuse. Here is that upon which all turns, since it is by such mutual clasping of hand in hand that the soul is lifted to eternal life!

O Christian, whoever you are, who writhest and cringest in the very slavishness of a diseased humility, do you ever think it?—you are neither insect nor reptile. If our Lord once seemed to use the proverbial epithet of "dog" toward the Syro-Phenician woman, it was but for the trial of her faith. That she could not help seeing in his pitying face, and she persisted until she had all she asked, and O, how much more! Beloved, it doth not yet appear what we shall be. But now, yes, *now*, are we the sons of God. And since our Maker and Monarch names us his children, and

Jesus hails us as his brethren, we drag these relationships down and into the dust by vilifying ourselves as we sometimes do. Stand upon your feet, man, and you will be that much the nearer your Lord!

"Knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee?" the Son of man demands of Daniel. "I will show thee that which is noted in the Scripture of truth." As the same great Teacher opened to the disciples on their way to Emmaus the truth concerning himself, so now He proceeds to unfold to Daniel the roll of history even to the end of the world. Daniel wrote without understanding except in grand outline; and with the details of date, of event, we have here nothing to do. With Daniel we know the glorious result. It was at Versailles, in the heart of hostile France, that William of Prussia was proclaimed Emperor of Germany; and it is there at Babylon, the capital of the then World-Power, that Christ is proclaimed—to Daniel, at least—the King of kings. Sounding only in his ears then, to-day it peals in the hearing of almost the whole world,—this blast of trumpets before the Coming Monarch. To Christ the Son of God is given "dominion, glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." The Babylonish monarchy was a confederation under one sovereign of all the multitude of nations then existing, and Daniel was the administrator next to Darius of the whole realm. There is, then, a fitness in this showing of himself to Daniel by that eternal Son who wields all empire in co-equality with the eternal Father.

Remember, too, how active and energetic a man Daniel had been, how vigilant, efficient, successful in the management of the affairs of the immense Babylonian monarchy. Remembering this, there is a peculiar fitness also not merely in knowing Him who is to rule as King forever, but in knowing in the same breath that this King rules by the hands of faithful servants like Daniel. For the summing up of his interview with the Son of God is, that "the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole Heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him. Hitherto is the end of the matter." Yes, it is Christ who is King, but King by the vigorous service, too, of men like Daniel. As his training when a youth had been but a preparation for the after-service of the monarch of Babylon, so his long life-time in that service was but discipline and drill toward his yet loftier labors for the King of kings in the ages that are yet to be.

There is one thing which may, in our day and degree, be as true of us as it was of this man, who is Jewish captive yet Babylonian statesman. It is the breadth of view to which he attains, in virtue of his personal companionship with the Son of God. In a word, let us name it that

BROADENING INFLUENCE

which comes to every one who habitually accepts and walks with Christ. And to understand this matter with practical clearness, let it be supposed that you who read

are in the employment of a great General—as a sergeant merely, or an orderly. It is impossible to you, coming from behind a counter, from between the handles of a plow or dropping saw and hammer, not to attain to a larger or at least a broader manhood, if it were merely from coming in and out of camp, from overhearing the talk of those who are carrying on a great war. Say, it is a king you serve. If it is but a humble position, you have—as page or coachman, gardener or valet—your even menial companionship with king and courtier, the chance conversation in your hearing of diplomats and privy councillors, could not but lift you into something larger than if you had remained in a smaller sphere.

So is it here. There are multitudes whose sole relation to the Son of God is that they live in a Christian land, are associated with Christian people, overhear what is said concerning the conquest of the world for Christ, concerning the glory of the great King. These are broadened in character, if they attain to no more than this. No man denies that those living in Christendom, even if not themselves Christians, are the superiors of all without. It is to these, in distinction from others, that the physical universe has been opened by spectroscope, microscope, telescope. These know the most, by far, of the laws of nature. The Hindus invented music, the Arabs arithmetic, the Greeks art, the Romans the science of war. The ancient philosophers sank the shafts of their inquiry deep down into the nature of man, contenting themselves with mining for knowledge in the narrow strata of human nature. In that which widens and enlarges a man, Christian men, though but

nominally such, excel all others. Take, in this lower meaning of the word, the Christian intellect: more vigorously by far than any other, does it strike out in every direction. The Christian conscience,—how quick it is and sensitive, wincing at wrong done to any man anywhere.

Let it be the Christian heart: Stanley is not a communicant, and yet how eagerly does he press after Livingstone toward the saving of Africa. A dray-horse cannot be beaten, the filthiest child in a city slum kicked and cursed, but a shudder runs through an entire city. Who send or receive vast immigrations? Colonize and build up the most distant Australias and Feejee Islands? Beat down barriers between all castes, all Chinas, Japans? All aristocracies fall before these, all exclusiveness of State Church or social position. Almost a fury is upon these to discover and invent, to read everything, to go everywhere. And all this merely from happening to be born in the camp of the Great Captain, from chancing to live in the lands in which the Great King is recognized.

It is to these (is it not remarkable?) that Providence reveals those hitherto undreamed-of forces, as of dynamite; those velocities, as of travel by railway; those swiftnesses, so to speak, of communication between remote points, as by telephone,—by which even in things purely of Nature we are being approximated, assimilated, to the life that is to be.

Now suppose, that instead of being merely as menials, you are officers upon the personal staff of that conqueror, are of the Cabinet of that king, are sincerely a Christian man or woman; how is it possible

but you should be broadened in character? You cannot be narrowed down into a bitter partisan, for to you all history is thrown open by Christ from beginning to end in at least its grand outlines; the final outcome of all revolution and war you already know. You cannot be held as in the astringency of any present poverty, knowing as you do, that you are joint heir with Christ to all things.

Others may languish, held in the chains of cruel wrong done yourself or others: you know who is to right every wrong, and to a grain's weight, at last. Are you caught in the tangle of any circumstance? Christ so rises upon you like the sun, that you smile to see how your tangle is but a cobweb, to perish at the first breeze. Are you held to room or bed by sickness? He tells you of an eternal health beyond the grave; and you laugh at the coming in of old age, knowing that you are one day to share his bloom of eternal youth! Let other men fret against the narrow confines of this little life: to you Christ has thrown open that after-existence which knows no limit. In degree of your companionship with the Son of man, how can you fail to grow toward the stature of a perfect man, —yours a nobler, broader manhood? Christ has Godhead added to his manhood; and who dares ask all that is meant when He tells us that we too are made "partakers of the divine nature,"—we too "filled with all the fulness of God"? No, it doth not yet appear what we shall be; we shall be like Him,—that is enough!

There is in Daniel, too, a marked unlikeness to the indolent Orientals, a something almost of Englishman or American, in this

of his. From about his eighteenth year, Daniel is a prisoner,—his country in ruins behind him. With Jerusalem, the Temple has sunk in ashes. During his long life-time in Babylon, he is without all that came to a Jew in the possession of a religious service, of a Sabbath or synagogue, of a priesthood, or such school of Gamaliel as that in which Saul of Tarsus was trained. Except for the single instance in which the Queen-mother brought Daniel to the remembrance of Belshazzar, he is without the influence, for evil or for good, of any woman. He possesses the rolls of Old Testament Scripture, so far as then collected. His feet have learned also the path of prayer, and it is by prayer that he ascends to God.

The conspirators judged rightly when they supposed that Daniel would prefer death at the jaws of the lions to an abandonment, though but for thirty days, of going to his God. Thirty days! As David said: "As for me I will call upon God: and the Lord shall save me. Evening, and morning, and at noon"—for this was the order of the Hebrew day, which began with set of sun—"will I pray and cry aloud; and He shall hear my voice." Therefore, "When Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime."

Cease to pray? All he was, all he thought, said, or did, was in answer to prayer! How could the praying

of a month ago, though all his life up to that date had been prayer, serve for the needs of to-day! He was begirt by foes who glared upon him with a closé and curious hate, to which that of the lions was king-like. The immense affairs of the Empire were devolved upon him, and hitherto he had managed them without a flaw, in virtue of what he received in praying. For its sin God's covenant Church had been torn up as by the roots from its own soil, and now lingered, a handful of captives in Babylon, liable to sink and perish in the universal heathenism by which they were surrounded. But for Daniel it would perish: and what then of the Messiah, upon whom it and the Gentile world depended? His influence with the king, his steady example before the Jews: upon this, upon him, upon one weak and aged man hung the cause of God in the earth! Yesterday's manna might do for other men, this morning's supplication might suffice for one less perilously placed: as to himself, he was too hardly bestead to go for half a day without divine help. Very often he supplemented this by weeks at a time of special fasting and prayer.

For, what was praying to Daniel? The reflex upon himself of pious thought and feeling, increased by utterance? Definitely, what he got by going to God was—God Himself! For the help of it, for the happiness of it, he would have God consciously beside him during every passing moment. He was as an earthen jar placed beneath the flowing of some mountain spring, and there could be no break in that flowing. Rather, like Jacob at the ford, Esau was too close upon him with his four hundred levelled lances for Daniel to let

go for an instant the hold of his arms about his Lord. Upon that Lord he hung his entire weight!

If we wonder that here is a man most perilously situated, concerning whom Scripture hints no defect, the reason is: here was not Daniel, here was Daniel's God! Therefore it is, that when the Almighty desired to depict in darkest colors the doom of a guilty land, He said: "Though these three men—Noah, Daniel, and Job—were in it, they should deliver but their own souls"; and repeats it.

But we miss the meaning of it all, unless we understand what Daniel's praying was. You cannot pray to an abstract Idea. You cannot pray to omnipotence in general, to omniscience, not even to love as a feeling. A man may go through an eloquent ritual of fine words to infinitude, to the absolute, to the unknown and unknowable, to the inscrutable, to the power which makes for righteousness, even as Comte made beautiful petitions to Humanity in general, then to Femininity. Lay it down as a certainty, that prayer to an impersonal God is an impossibility. You cannot get your arms about Immensity. No man can pray unless he can say "THOU" to him to whom he prays. Prayer is precisely that which a child makes to its mother or to its father. Therefore it is the easiest thing in the world to teach a child to pray to God: the only difference is that this Father is unseen.

No, you cannot pray except to a PERSON; otherwise it is merely going through a form of words to Vastness, Emptiness, Nothingness. Hence Jesus says, "No man can come unto the Father except by me," adding that most remarkable assurance: "If ye shall ask anything

in my name *I* will do it!" Therefore, when the mob stoned Stephen, it was "Stephen calling upon God and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." The "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" of Saul on his overthrow, was but the first petition of a supplication which ceased only with his life. As with Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Manoah and his wife, and now with Daniel, the Deity addressed in prayer is Christ, the Son of God. Daniel no more than we could supplicate an impersonal God; and what conception have we of highest personality except as of a man? Son of God, Son of man,—this is He at whose feet Daniel prayed prostrate. And this is, definitely, that God whom Daniel got in praying. "It is not I, but Christ," is in some form the perpetual declaration of Paul; and it is of all suppliants in all ages that Jesus says, "Without me ye can do nothing."

Herein is Daniel a self-made man. Cast by circumstances completely upon God, in proportion as he is aware of a perpetual companionship with Christ, does he exert himself to the utmost. Is it not always so?

A last thing to be mentioned of Daniel is, that IT IS ALWAYS THE STRONGEST MAN WHO IS THE BEST BELOVED. None will deny that Joseph developed in Egypt into one of the wisest and most energetic of business men. In the moment of emergency he goes from a dungeon to the management of an Empire, even as he had gone from the complete control of Potiphar's household to the control of that dungeon. During the years of plenty, and then of famine, his stewardship over Egypt is a masterpiece of consummate statesmanship; nor does he lose his control of affairs so long as he lives.

Yet who more beloved than Joseph? Potiphar, the jailor, the chief butler, the servants of Pharaoh, Pharaoh himself: that he wins the love of all these is clearly taught; and all who know Joseph are little behind old Jacob, when he casts his aged arms about his son and rejoices in him. So was it with David. No soldier, no sovereign stands higher than he for stern, steady, successful war first, and after that the conduct of a kingdom. How he was beloved of all, we know, when not even Jonathan whom he supplants upon the throne, nor poor limping Mephibosheth, can refrain from giving him their whole hearts.

It is but a repetition of this in the case of Daniel. That he was from childhood of an inflexible will; that he ruled Nebuchadnezzar and Darius as completely as he ruled the Hebrew Church and the vast Empire of which he was Prime Minister, is evident. Disdaining the gifts of Belshazzar, facing every conspirator undauntedly, resolute, economic, energetic, without flaw or fault as a man and as a statesman, we know from the united testimony of his foes. Yet how heartily was he loved! The eunuchs of the East are proverbial for their soured and despotic natures, yet Daniel was in "favor and tender love with the Prince of the eunuchs,"—not more than with Nebuchadnezzar, who seems to have worshipped Daniel as much as he came to worship Daniel's God. There runs a flavor of woman's affection for him through the brief commendation made of Daniel to Belshazzar by the aged Queen-mother. Darius was a veteran conqueror, hardened from many a battle, inured to a supreme selfishness by a lifetime of success and adulation: yet when Daniel is cast

to the lions "the king passed the night fasting; neither were instruments of music brought before him; and his sleep went from him." We can almost see this lord of all nations as "he arose very early in the morning and went in haste unto the den of lions. And when he came to the den he cried with a lamentable voice, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God whom thou servest continually able to deliver thee from the lions?" It is an incidental touch upon his noble portrait, as showing the courtesy and calmness of a man who has passed a night unterrified among wild beasts, that he prefaces his reply with the usual "O king, live forever."

Nor was his a character which failed to awaken peculiar affection even in the heavenly world, in which there surely are myriad types of all lovableness. When Gabriel, "caused to fly very swiftly," comes to him he prefaces what he has to say with the words, "O Daniel, thou art greatly beloved." It is so when the Son of God comes to him: "O Daniel, a man greatly beloved," is the beginning of His communion with him. And when Daniel faints before this sudden appearing of Christ, it was as when the same Saviour looked upon the young ruler and loved him, as when John is described as the disciple whom Jesus loved, as when it is said, "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister and Lazarus." So He says yet again to Daniel: "O man greatly beloved, fear not, peace be unto thee; be strong, yea, be strong!"

Why is this? A man may be profoundly admired as a great general, an august monarch: but love is usually for those in whom the amiable traits are chiefly de-

veloped. Yet here is a man who stands second to none in history as statesman and man of affairs. Like some colossal statue in bronze, he fills a niche lower than none in the valhalla of heroes, the pantheon of the demi-gods. Harry V. of England, Harry IV. of France, were very popular; but it was really in virtue of their popular weaknesses. But here is a Bismarck without Bismarck's brutality, a Cavour without Cavour's cunning, a Cæsar without Cæsar's cruelty, an Alexander without Alexander's dissoluteness. Doubtless in what he himself styled "the king's business," Daniel has to levy taxes, suppress insurrections, equalize laws, manage and control the tangled affairs of the hundred and twenty provinces of an empire embracing all climes, languages, religions: yet is this majestic man of men "a man greatly beloved!"

The explanation is very easy. The Christ, with whom he lived in closest communion, is the Great Captain, marching his forces to the conquest of the world; the Great King of kings, holding sword and sceptre, possessed of all imaginable vigor, wisdom, power, justice: yet the outcome of it all is—what? "Thou art fairer than the children of men," "the chiefest among ten thousand, and the one altogether lovely." Companionship with Christ! It is that which broadens a man, brings out all the grander, sterner qualities of manhood, and yet into such symmetry of rounded fulness that the blending into one man of His manifold attributes makes the perfect harmony of love, even as the right interblending into one of all chords makes music.

Five hundred and thirty-four years are to pass; and then a star shines upon a stable in which kneels the

three men from that East in which Daniel died, and of his own class and kind. Now the Son of God is a babe,—thought inconceivable by Daniel! He is born to grow up, to speak as never man spake, to heal all who come. During no one of these Ten Theophanies has He lingered more than for a few moments at longest; now He comes to sojourn for days, months, years! But He lives only to die,—in his most daring thoughts, Daniel did not dream of *that*,—to die for men. Not until then have all His former manifestations, from creation, had their fulfilment. Then He can exclaim, "It is finished!" and bow his head in death. And as everything going before was but preparation, so all things coming after are but applications of that.

A GLANCE BEHIND AT CLOSING.

When a dearly loved guest has gone at last from our hearthstone, we love, sitting around it, to recall him as well as we can. A glove he has dropped, a book he has left, any gift he has given, is an aid to us in this. Especially if he is one who is illustrious for intellect or beneficence, an incident he has narrated, a poem he has quoted, a weighty maxim he has left sparkling like a diamond in our keeping—whatever, in fact, he has said or done while with us, his aspect on this or that occasion, a smile, a gesture,—nothing is worthless if it serves to bring him back again to mind.

And now that the Son of God has made to Daniel the last of these his ten revelations of himself to men, during Old Testament days, let us try to remind each other of those things connected with his too brief and widely separated visits, which have made the deepest impression upon us, which have left the strongest savor and distinguishing flavor of himself in our hearts.

He always came uninvited. To Abraham, returning weary and worn from the slaughter of his enemies (so new and strange a work to the Patriarch), He stands—the raiment and crown of one who is both priest and king upon his person, the bread and wine in his hands, and the blessing upon his lips. That He is there uninvited, undreamed of, is proof of his august superiority

to the Patriarch, since it is of the overflowing of a nature which knows no shores to its love. Nor even then does the Patriarch dare to beg a repetition of this revelation of the Son of God; and there is the sweetness of a new surprise, when he is again visited as he sits in the door of his tent.

Jacob prayed beside Jabbok; but that the One to whom he prayed should himself come in answer to prayer was a something quite beyond the importunity of his most passionate request. He had expected Esau: lo, here is the Son of God! It is true that Moses had besought of God the showing to him of his glory, as he had that he might be allowed to go over Jordan. In refusing him the latter request, God grants to Moses the former. But it is impossible not to think that the sight of the Son of God was a something beyond what he had asked; so simple did it seem, so natural, the God of Israel and yet a man with whom he can converse "face to face as a man talketh with his friend." In a few hours after, he is to find that his brother Aaron has erected, during his absence upon Sinai, the golden calf. He can better afford losing the one human friend in whom he had trusted, now that he has gained in his place this more than a brother.

So unsolicited is the coming to Joshua of Christ as an armed man, that he mistakes Him at first for a heathen enemy. The utmost Gideon hoped was, that he might (he prayed for nothing beyond) finish the threshing of his sheaf or two of wheat undetected by the Midianites. Prophet as he was, Ezekiel had no more asked that the Son of man should come to him enthroned upon the complex wheels of Providence, than had the parents of

Samson that to them should come One so much more than the longed-for son, even the Giver of that Son. And the same surprise is true of the three Hebrews, and of Daniel.

It is so of every coming of Christ, of every act of his life. Not even impulsive Peter dared to ask of Christ to feed the hungry multitude the second time. When once He had shown his willingness to heal, the Lord was often entreated to do so: but Jairus did not ask for *that*, when Christ raised his daughter from the dead. Familiar as the sisters were with Jesus, they no more dared to ask for the raising to life of Lazarus, than did the widow who came weeping after her son out of the gate of Nain. With her woman's faith, Martha ventures the hesitating suggestion, "I know that even now whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee": well as she knew Him, she dared not put her desperate yearning into the shape of a request.

For ages the Church of God had been asking that Messiah, of whom they would never have known, had He not been promised, might come: but who of them asked that He would come as a babe in a manger, that He would live the life of a poor man, be slain for the sins of the world? "Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto Thee!" is the prayer, instead, of Peter. So far from asking it, how does Peter himself recoil from having his Lord wash his feet!

And the giving of the bread and the wine,—who of the millions who have eaten of it would have suggested such a sacrament to Christ? Not Mary herself conceived of such a thing, much less asked it through

her tears of Christ dying above her on the cross, that He should rise again from the dead. The forty days' tarrying with his disciples after his Resurrection, the giving of the Holy Ghost, the writing of the Scriptures, the steady conquest of the world to himself,—imagine that the giving here had been measured by the asking. The harp, the crown, the throne, the body made like that of Christ, the companionship of the redeemed, the eternity of Heaven,—these are all as unsolicited by us as is Christ himself.

He who becomes a believer not by Christian nurture and from childhood, but later in life and as in a day, finds his chief gladness in this,—that the Saviour is his almost without the asking. "When we were enemies," "Not that we loved Him, but that He first loved us!" The superabundance of this love—surely that is the unspeakableness of the gift—its uninvitedness. Is it not that which proclaims Him the unlimited God?

Since, then, He gives us so much we did not ask for, shall we murmur when He refuses to bestow that for which we do ask? Since He comes to us so often, so abundantly, unasked, shall we hesitate to ask when He seems to linger by the way?

Every coming of Christ is unexpected. That follows upon His coming unrequested. Take each instance, except that to Moses upon the mount, of these comings of the Son of God to men, it is in no instance on a date or at a place arranged beforehand. Abraham, Joshua, Gideon, the parents of Samson, the king who beholds the fourth man in the furnace, Daniel—they are always taken by surprise. The attitude of

the one visited is invariably of amazement. That of Abraham, when the Son of God comes to him seated in his tent-door, seems least of all so: is it not because he had seen his Lord not long before, in the person of the priest who is also a king?

So it is always,—after the birth of Christ in Bethlehem, as before. Almost in the act of the Fall, the Seed of the woman is promised to bruise the Serpent's head. All Scripture thereafter is written to tell of this Messiah, who is to come. All ritual of Old Testament worship is to set Him forth, and the nature of his work when He has come. None the less is his arrival as a babe so great a surprise as to result in his rejection and crucifixion. To Saul, journeying to Damascus, Christ is as unexpected as He is unsolicited; and it is this which prostrates him in the dust, trembling and astonished.

It may help us to understand the Son of God the better, if we note rapidly some of the things in which his appearances to the men of Old Testament times *differed from the revelation of himself to men at and after his birth of Mary.*

When he revealed himself to Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Joshua and the rest, it was—like Adam in Eden—as a full-grown man in the prime of his manhood, as of his Godhead. It is in keeping with this, that his sojourn is upon each occasion but for an hour or so, and that He should disappear as suddenly as He came. When He comes in Bethlehem, it is to live the average life of a man in average circumstances. Therefore is He born a babe, beginning life with every other man. He grows by the slow and gradual growth of

day added to day through infancy and childhood. He is a youth, a young man, a man full grown. Thus does He pass through the ordinary stages of our life, lives its average duration, dies, making the complete round of human existence. It is upon the same plane of gradual ascent that He lives the simple life of the common people in Nazareth, that He is baptized by the one who heralds him, that He begins and continues to preach and to work miracles. It is by a law as steady as that of the growth of an oak or of a man, that the increase of stature and wisdom in our Lord is all in the line of gradual and culminating manifestation.

We can trace this in the ever deepening breadth and force of his teaching, in the ever more and more God-like nature of his miracles, in an ever enlarging manhood which every day more powerfully arrests, confronts, influences, amazes all. Take his teaching: it begins by his saying to Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again"; it closes with his saying to the thief dying by his side, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise"; a worse than Nicodemus made meet for Paradise by being made a new creature.

Take his miracles: beginning with the turning of water into wine, they close with the raising of Lazarus from the dead, with creating a new ear for Malchus, reaching a climax in that which is so much more the revelation of a God than water made into wine,—the creating of a glorified saint (as has been said) out of a felon perishing in his corruption.

Take the impression He makes upon men as a man: it begins with that made upon the shepherds and the magi by his infant face, his slowly-opening eyes, his

outreaching of baby hands; it ends with the multitude reeling backward before his "I am He," with Pilate writhing before his august presence in desperate endeavors to escape from condemning Him, with the centurion saying of Him, hanging dead upon the cross, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"

It is thus by a slow, gradual, accumulative revelation of Himself that he can say at last, "It is finished!" and die. Added to this is the gift of the Holy Ghost, and of the completed Scriptures, by which the race has at last the full and final manifestation of the Son of God. If we wonder why ours should be so much the longest dispensation of all, let us remember it is to allow the race ample time for a complete contemplation of God in flesh, to allow an unhurried, unhindered opportunity for the mustard-seed birth and growth of that faith by which alone is He apprehended.

Other differences between our Lord's appearances before and after his birth by Mary may be mentioned, which aid us here very much. In the former instances we have seen how He flashed suddenly upon the view, lingered but a few moments, and vanished. Not so since then. Then his appearance prostrated even the chosen friends to whom He appeared, with a shock only less than enough to kill: not so when He lingers among men in Judea. Then He has to do only with men and women, full grown: in Judea He sits and rests while little children cluster about Him to be taken in his arms and blessed. In Old Testament times He holds audience only with those of his chosen Church,—only, in fact, with those carefully selected from among his own people. There were none in the world of

Judea from whom He secluded himself afterward: women as men; Romans and Greeks as well as Jews; publicans, harlots, Herodians. Judas associates with him as freely as Peter or John; Pilate, Caiaphas, Annas or Herod as closely as Nicodemus, his mother or his Apostles. All who will may see him, hear him, witness whatever He does, be healed of whatever disease they have.

Observe this also: in each of his revelations of himself in Old Testament times He and the one to whom He appears is embowered from all the world as in the deep seclusion of a dense forest, of a midnight hour, of a mountain summit. On one occasion He is seen by seventy Elders; upon two occasions by a man and his wife; on every other occasion by but the one favored—Jacob, Joshua, Gideon, Ezekiel, Daniel. Here there is quiet, serenity, peaceful opportunity. How different after He is made the Son of Mary! What an almost horror of publicity is there in the Son of God standing before Pilate, Herod, or the High-Priest. None are excluded. Jesus is the centre of an ever-changing current of people of all kinds. He ascends Calvary amid a throng of Romans, Jews, women, curious visitors at Jerusalem from all over the world.

He is lifted up from the cross high over the heads of all. Stripped of his seamless robe, He hangs there in view of every man who cares to look. Disciples are there, but they cannot shield his open agony from the gaze of the world. His mother is there; but when before or since was ever mother unable, if present, to wipe the death-dews from the brows of her dying son, unable to close his eyes glazing in death? As He

hangs, all jarring sounds beat upon his unprotected ears, all unseemly sights upon his eyes. Over the shoulders of those grouped about him are the heads of myriads upon myriads of men, women, little children, until the world shall end gazing upon him—gazing upon him whose arms are opened on the cross to the reception of all who will come. "He openeth his hand and supplieth the wants of every living thing," and those hands which freely give all that is given are held open by the nails. The universe of devils and unfallen angels behold him, and the dead of all ages. All planets and stars behold him, coming out to see as the sun shudders and hides its face. Never was a death so public as this!

Remember that! Take all that is said about him in Scripture, all that is whispered by the intuition of all men as to the need of some one to come, the prophecies and promises from creation, the language concerning him of every Jewish symbol and of every sacrifice upon every altar and in every land. Add to this his revelations of himself to men from age to age before Bethlehem is built, no two of these alike. To this add the complete manifestation of himself during his sojourn on earth, and by his Word and his Spirit to men during these two thousand years since. Heap, in addition to this, the libraries of books in all ages concerning him, for and against. To these add the lectures, sermons, addresses of all kinds in relation to him. Let there be added all that poetry and song, soaring to him in praise, has said, what mothers have told their children of him, and what has been taught in schools the world over. The words concerning this Man, against him and for,

which have gone from beneath the press in flying sheets of every species—the flour, so to speak, which has gone from the mill of the press into the food of all tables everywhere,—let these go toward the sum. Let all platform discussions in attack upon him and in defence swell the account, and the greater concentration of all that is said definitely upon the Person of the Son of God, and the more and more that is said of him with every passing day.

Considering this,—was ever any subject of thought since thought began, as widely, as thoroughly thought upon? *Was there ever a person in any land or in any age before the eyes of men, the intellect of men, the heart of men, so much and so intensely as this one?* What Nimrod, Tamerlane, Alexander, Cæsar, Napoleon, was ever as much the theme of thought, of feeling, of speech, each in his own day, as Christ has been always and everywhere?

If God the Father, God the Holy Ghost, are pleased to hide themselves in excess of blinding light from all eyes, it has not been so with God the Son—of Him who is the Revelation of the One God. In the most unreserved sense of the word, here has been Immanuel, God with us. God was *manifest* in the flesh indeed! Every hour are there fewer men in the world who have never at least heard of Him, and so far as the creature can apprehend his Creator has that Creator been made known to him. *Every* eye shall see Him: but that is when He comes to close accounts with a race to which He will then have been revealed to the utmost limits of his power to unveil himself, to the utmost bounds of their power to see and accept.

And what is the precise end to which our Maker has thus made himself known to us? The question may be asked, may be answered, with more force when we call to mind one marked peculiarity of the showing by Christ of himself to men. It is this. He is perfectly cognizant of our world, and of everything and every person in it from the beginning; as He is of all worlds, all objects, persons, events in his universe of worlds—of hell and heaven. Now it is natural that those to whom He showed himself before his birth in Bethlehem should have desired to know many things which He alone could impart. After He comes among men to sojourn, nothing could be more characteristic of men than to seek to know a thousand such things as He only can tell. It is a strong desire every man has, to proclaim whatever he knows of the striking and the wonderful; and his impulse is to rush to tell it. *Yet see how reticent is this man*, whose eyes have seen everything, whose feet have trodden every path open to God. Mark how profound is his silence to whomsoever He shows himself, except along one line. Whether it is before or after his birth, never for an instant does He swerve from that line. And what is that upon which alone He dwells, the one exclusive object of his showing himself at all?

You have shared with the crowd the thrill of feeling when a fire-engine dashes down the street,—a life-escape machine, it may be, in full gallop after it. Perhaps you have stood upon some midnight sea-shore during the howling of a storm, and have helped launch the life-boat; have held your breath beside the mortar, which with a flash of red fire hurls over the wrecked

ship the rope by which the life-saving cradle comes and goes into and out of the foaming jaws of death,—wherever and however an effort is being made to rescue the perishing; and in proportion to the danger is our interest in the effort. Now, the one thing which brings the Son of God among men is—what? Queen Elizabeth made her royal progresses through her dominions to receive the homage of her subjects; Edward visited Ireland to suppress insurrection; Alexander marched upon India to add it to his empire: when God, in the person of his Son, reveals himself to men, *it is upon one exclusive errand—to save.*

If He shows himself for an instant to those of earliest days as Priest and King, it is to make himself known before the Hebrew Church as He who has reference also to the myriads outside any and every church. He comes to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah: would He have revealed himself in flesh to Abraham, if it had not been in His effort to save Lot? It is to save Jacob from Esau that He comes to him. Salvation from the dominion of the Law, by the death of Him who enacts and obeys all law, is the reason of his showing to Moses on the mount. When He comes to Joshua, it is with unsheathed sword, and to show him how to fight for a home for Israel. If Gideon, if Manoah and his wife, converse with Him, it is toward the raising up of deliverance for the people of God. Many of his own disciples will tremble, terrified at the appalling complexities of providence: it is to reassure these that He shows himself to Ezekiel as throned upon and controlling every foot and hand, every wheel and wing, toward their highest good and his own glory. Many

a man has been snatched from base cowardice before some idol, from fiercer flame in the furnace than he can endure, by our Lord's companionship with the three Hebrews on the plains of Dura. When He comes to Daniel, it is to relieve men of their last and least apprehension at the roar of bloody revolutions and the crash of downfalling empires, by showing that the result of all is to crown Him king forever over earth as over heaven.

"Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah: this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty *to save!*"

As a certain coin rounds within its golden rim every one of a thousand separate cents, so each and all of the manifestations of himself by the Son of God are held within one sentence: "God sent His Son to be *the Saviour of the world.*"

Were it possible to do so, one would like to add to this summary a consideration of the way in which *the Son of God is the converging point upon which all men come together and are made one.* The difficulty is, that all illustration fails. The fact to be set forth outgoes and exceeds every method of setting it forth. The corner-stone upon which the building reposes; the keystone against and upon which the granite blocks of an arch rest; the shepherd around whom clusters the flock; the Gideon of the hour, at the blast of whose trumpet Israel assembles about him against the Midianites,—how tame and inadequate are these to help us understand how Christ is the rallying centre of all revelation.

The rumor runs that diamonds are found in southern Africa, and its deserts are alive, as in an instant, with eager seekers from all points of the compass. Upon the winged winds flies the fact that gold has been discovered in California, and the planet is marked out no longer by lines of latitude, longitude, tropic and the like, but by those of travel thitherward across land and water. But the attractive force of gold or diamond faints and fails in comparison to that of Christ.

Examining the intervals between the Theophanies, we find that from the first to the second appearance of Christ to Abraham is fifteen years; from this to the revelations to Jacob is one hundred and fifty-nine years; from this to the manifestation to Moses on Sinai is two hundred and forty-eight years. Forty years elapse before Christ, complying with the promise that He should be a "Leader and Commander to the people," appears to Joshua as an armed man. From Joshua to Gideon is two hundred and forty-two years; from Gideon to Manoah is eighty-eight years; from Manoah to Ezekiel is five hundred and sixty-six years; from Ezekiel to the three Hebrews is fifteen years; and sixty years are fled before Christ lays his hand upon the head of Daniel. As the Son of God is the same to each and all of these, so do they become, standing thus side by side before Christ, but so many duplicates and repetitions, as it were, of the same loving, adoring servant. What is there to compare with the bringing of Abraham and Daniel, so far apart in the ages, into such absolute unity of character and of purpose? Yet the Patriarch is not brought thus into greater oneness with Daniel than he is with John and Paul, drawn so

many centuries later into companionship with the same Saviour.

Tremendous changes have taken place during these near two thousand years since Paul and John. What vast discoveries! what inventions! What an amazing evolution and development in the disciple of Christ: yet, standing beside each other in the presence of their Lord, the father of the faithful and the latest-born of his spiritual offspring, almost four thousand years apart, are as one man. You can overleap the nearly six thousand years since Creation by placing alongside of the Christian of to-day the wild aborigine of whatever dark abyss of Africa is yet unvisited by Stanley; let that native savage kneel at the feet of Jesus, and, lo! the other kneeling there beside him is as the same man!

Analyze, if you can, this victorious force, beneath the tremendous play of which all barriers between men are being ground to dust. First, Christ draws, as He says, all men to Him out of, across, everything. So drawn, there is his fusing force, by which they are melted into one by the white heat of mutual love; his refining force, by which their dross is consumed; his elevating force, by which they are lifted to take in from his stand-point the landscape of the world; his expanding force, by which every disciple is broadened into a thousand times his native manhood; his impelling force, by which—and immeasurably more since his "Go ye into all the world"—each soul is sent out to save the race.

Here, then, is Unity wrought out in men yielding themselves, from all around the compass, to the strong Son of God. Here is the unity of love for what God

loves, and unity of hate for what God hates; unity of toil for the one Master, and unity of rest in Him; unity of struggle after holiness, and unity of sincere repentance when fallen into sin; unity of sorrow for the evil, and unity of gladness in God; unity of recoil from whatever defiles, and unity of aspiration after all that is noble and good. Musicians attain to unity of sound, and those who hear music arrive at oneness thereto of movement in the dance or in the march. Men become as one in the unity of effort after money, after power. But there is no such identity among men as in this intensity of innermost effort; this endurance, sweep, success of outermost influence. Any two believers,—say the richest man beside the poorest, the blackest in complexion beside the whitest, the most famous beside the obscurest,—are duplicates each of the other, because each is but the repetition of Christ.

Thus it is He gathers together in one the children of God scattered abroad. Indian red, Mongolian yellow, African black, Italian brown, English white,—all colors of mankind blend themselves lovingly into the bow about the throne of their common Lord. Even as the central sun sweeps the worlds, each moving with independent force upon its own axis and in its own orbit, about itself, at harmony with each other and with the focal soul and centre of all light, heat, force and life, so is it with Christ: He the one supreme, unifying Force. We shall attain to a clearer comprehension of this, when we behold the harmonious unity of the myriads made in heaven as one man, and singing: "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred and tongue and people and

nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests!"

Here is yet another thing, and which is best illustrated by an experience of the writer. It so happened that he became acquainted with a Christian gentleman, a resident of one of our largest cities, and who was regarded by all who knew him as a model of definitely Christian manhood. Of a magnificent bodily frame, his head and shoulders above men in general, broad-chested, with the brow and bearing of an emperor, he commanded universal, unanimous esteem for his splendid business capacity and energy. More than all, he was considered to be a man of high honor, stern justice, spotless integrity; so much so, that, in addition to the important position filled by him, he was continually being placed in trust, as executor and otherwise, of those having large sums of money. Thoroughly versed in Scripture, an energetic superintendent of a Sabbath-school, always ready with hand and purse for every good work,—that he was a devoted husband and father merely completed upon his head the royal crown of what seemed to be a Christian character without a flaw. "For once," the writer said to himself and to others, "I have met my ideal of a man!" and the gentleman was to him an answer to many a scoff—a revenue, so to speak, of sterling satisfaction.

Alas! as in one instant, this exemplar was guilty of an act, the meanness of which was only surpassed by its cruel injustice; meanness and injustice being both of them eclipsed by a serene unconsciousness of wrong on the part of the transgressor. To the writer, this Dagon, this god of his admiration, was shivered by its

fall to dust; and it was—and not to him alone—the final destruction of all hope of finding perfection in men.

It was well it should be so. *Henceforth, to the writer at least, there is but one man out of all men.* "The superiority of Christ, and to his most immediate followers, is," says J. S. Mill, "the strongest argument for Christ." Perhaps no one who reads these lines but has had a like, possibly an often repeated, disappointment concerning even the best Christians. So much the more eagerly does the heart turn to Christ. We *must* have a friend,—not for the exquisite pleasure merely of loving and being loved: the world is such, and we are such that our practical, daily need of a friend is only less than that for air, for water, for food. Yet who has secured the friend he dies to have? Because it is not in human nature for him to be to you, any more than for you to be to him, the more than brother you so strongly desire. Even when, for an instant, you seem to have secured such an one, he removes far away, is lost through some misunderstanding, dies, is driven deep into himself by the stress of some storm too terribly personal to himself for you to share; or is shattered by some downfall.

And thus we come to see that the dearest Damon Pythias ever had is, at last, but a symbol of Christ. The friend you most love and rely upon bears to this Friend the same relation that the lamb does to Him as the One Sacrifice. It is *He* who so constructs our heart that it cries out for a friend. He it is who makes the ideal so high, the desire for it so strong, that we may find in Him, in Him alone, the satisfaction of that desire.

That He has laid down his life for us should be proof enough of this.

We need practical guidance at every step: and here is One who is not wise only, who is himself "the Wisdom of God." Take in, if you can, the thought that Wisdom is declared in Scripture to be a *person!* Solomon represents Wisdom as calling to the sons of men. And John says that this Person—with God "from the beginning, or ever the earth was"—is the Word of God, is God, God manifest in the flesh. Such is our Friend — Infinite Wisdom, Infinite Power, Infinite Love!

Go back with slow and careful step through these Ten Theophanies. Here are ten separate manifestations of God in man to men during so many centuries, to such variety of men, through such diversity of circumstance: and each is but a new revelation of Him as a "friend that sticketh closer than a brother." Come down to later days. Consider Him after He has been born as a babe. Forget for a while his Godlike grandeur. Descend from the mount, where his transfiguring glory forces you to drop your eyes. Cease to follow his ascending form, as He passes from Bethany to his Father. Look only at the small, special incidents of his life that went before. John is the disciple whom Jesus loved, and who rests his head upon the bosom of his Lord. The sisters act knowingly when they send to Jesus, saying, "Lord, behold he whom thou lovest" (no name but that) "is sick." "Now Jesus," says the inspiring Spirit of all truth, "loved Martha and her sister, and Lazarus"; and all that follows is proof most touching of that—the tears of Christ, no less than the

cry which calls the dead to life. His patience with impulsive Peter, the look He gives him when he has denied his Lord, the word He sends by Mary after his resurrection, "Tell my brethren and *Peter*"—these are tokens of friendship more touching than anything that ever passed between David and Jonathan.

From first to last Jesus is the revelation to us of our chiefest Friend. How vast the loss to you, if you fail to recognize and rely upon Him as such!

Consider this also. Adam lives his nine hundred and thirty years and dies. Then follow, in procession long and slow, Seth with his nine hundred and twelve years, Enos living seven years less, and followed by Cainan, who exceeds by fifteen years the lifetime of Mahalaleel. Dying at eight hundred and ninety-five, Jared comes to the throne of the dynasty of the race at nine hundred and sixty-two, while Enoch is snatched to Heaven when little more than a third of that time. Methuselah towers into a monument for all time by attaining the greatest age—nearly a thousand years—known to men; while Lamech, bewailing his mysterious doom, finds comfort in Noah.

Thus age after age men are born, reach their noonday, decline toward the dust from which they rose. Noah is a wonder for near four hundred years after the Deluge. And so arise the Patriarchs, and live their lives and die. Moses is an unbroken man to the hour of his death, at one hundred and twenty. After him is the long succession of Judges, Kings good and bad. Jerusalem is destroyed, is rebuilt. The Saviour is born in due time. And so the ages come and go, each represented by some one, chiefest of men, who can re-

count before he passes away what wonders he has seen. Thus, up to this hour. What long procession of eras, epoch upon epoch, period upon period!

And from "the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." He is in the supreme vigor of his life when He makes the world, and pronounces it good. The cool of the day finds Him among the green aisles of Eden with Adam. He is in the plenitude of an undiminishing existence when He walks with Enoch also, when He shuts Noah into the ark. Age has not touched Him when He leads forth Abraham; nor is it from decaying strength that He yields to Jacob by the ford. To David He is the same as to Moses, to Daniel as to Pilate, to Augustine as to Paul, to the humblest preacher to-day as to Chrysostom ages ago in Constantinople. Men rise, flourish, pass away: to-day and to us Christ our Lord is in the primeval fulness of that Godhead which dwells in Him, in the radiant bloom of his eternal loveliness and strength. The heathen of old broke into ecstasies of admiration of Apollo—"ever fair and ever young!" The raptures of our adoring love are given instead to Him who has "the dew of His youth," "Jesus Christ, yesterday, to-day, forever the same." That there may be no conceivable hesitation concerning the One meant, the prophet points to Beth-lehem Ephratah, and exclaims: "Thou, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be Ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."

Try to bring home to yourself, if you can, that this

Friend—God yet man, man yet God—is as near to you this hour as He was to Adam in Eden, as lovingly near in the unlimited prime, plenitude, power of his everlasting youth! As from eternity past, as to eternity to come, *He* is here, now, with you, with me.

He who tries to write these lines cannot see them for happy tears; he trembles unable to contain, yet wholly unable to express, the thought—Immanuel! God with us! Only the large language used by the saints in light may express that consciousness of an ever-present Lord, which ceases at last to be a mere belief, and striking as into the very arteries and veins, bone and brain, becomes part of the circulation and constitution, the life of the believer!

But, read and ponder as we may over the manifold manifestations of the Son of God, not even his long and intimate association with his Master sufficed to make Peter exclaim, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!" "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona!" that Master explains to him, "for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." For "no man can say that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."

And now—awaiting "the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ"—"to the Blessed and Only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who only hath Immortality, dwelling in the Light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to Him be Honor and Power Everlasting!"

AMEN.

NOTES.

The various Hebrew Names of God, as used in the Theophanies.

THEOPHANY I.

The one name employed here (Genesis xiv. 18, 19, 20, 22) is *Elyon*, עֶלְיוֹן—High, Uppermost, Most High. It is very remarkable that the only other places in Scripture in which this term is used are Num. xxiv. 16, Deut. xxxii. 8, 2 Sam. xxii. 14, Psalm vii. 17, and in sixteen other places in the Psalms; as also Isaiah xiv. 14, Lam. iii. 35, 38. Upon examination it is found that, excepting the few places in the Psalms, this name of God is singularly unecclesiastical and apart from the Hebrew dispensation.

In Numbers it is applied to the Almighty by Balaam, who is certainly in no relation save of hostility to Israel. In Deuteronomy it expresses an act of the Creator which goes before his covenant with Abraham, "when the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam." So in Samuel, "The Lord thundered from heaven, and the Most High uttered his voice," where it is of the God of nature that the term is used. In Lamentations, it is taken to signify God the Judge of all. The only other places are Daniel vii. 18, 22, 25, 27, where the Prophet is speaking of the conquest of the whole world by Christ, when both Hebrew and the existing Christian dispensations shall have ceased to be.

Could anything more clearly set forth the fact that the use of this particular name of the Almighty by the Priest-King is with

reference to his attitude toward the entire race, and wholly apart from this nation or dispensation or that? When Abraham speaks (Gen. xiv. 22) he identifies with the Most High of Melchizedek the "Lord" יְהוָה *Yehovah, i. e.,* "He who is,"—who reveals Himself to him in Theophany II.: putting thus beyond all dispute that He, at whose feet as a man he pleads for Sodom, is the same Divine Being named in connection with Melchizedek.

THEOPHANY II.

אֲדֹנָי *Adonai*, Lord (Genesis xviii. 3) is the same word as is applied to the Almighty, Deut. iii. 24, by Moses in importunate prayer, and translated "O Lord God." And the same term is used in verses 27, 30, 31, 32 of this Theophany. In verses 1, 13, 14, 17, 19. 20. 22, 26, 33 the name *Yehovah* (as in Theophany I.) is employed, so that unrebuked the Patriarch gives to this guest, eating and walking with him, the name used of the Almighty to Moses at the burning bush. Would Abraham have been permitted to take the name of God thus in vain,—as in vain and blasphemous it would have been,—if that guest were other than the God of the Hebrews?

THEOPHANY III.

Here Jacob calls the name of the place in which he wrestles with his celestial visitor, *Peniel,—i. e.,* the face of God.

THEOPHANY IV.

In this 24th chapter of Exodus, verses 10, 11, the term employed is אֱלֹהִים *Elohim*—objects of worship,—the same name given to the Almighty (Genesis i. 1) in the act of creating the world, of judging Adam, Eve and the Serpent, and elsewhere.

In Theophanies V., VI., VII., VIII., the term *Yehovah* is employed.

THEOPHANY IX.

The term עֶלְיוֹן *Illai*, Most High, is used (Dan. iii. 26). In the remaining verses (Dan. iii. 26, 28, 29) the name אֱלָהּ *Elah*, object of worship, is used.

THEOPHANY X.

Here (Daniel x. 17, 19) the term אָדוֹן *Adon*, Master, is employed,—the same as when (Deut. x. 17) it is said by Moses to Israel: "The Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty and a terrible."

As illustrating what are styled the undesigned coincidences of Scripture, it may be mentioned that Daniel v. 16 was at one time—with the whole chapter, in fact—a cause of great perplexity to scholars. Profane historians state that when Babylon was taken by Darius, its king was not in the city, but at Borsippa, in a distant part of his Empire, whereas it is stated (Daniel v. 30) that Belshazzar the king was slain on the night the city was taken. But further investigation has shown that Labynetos, the king of Babylon, had—as was often the case—associated with himself upon the throne one who also bore the name of king; and it was Labynetos who escaped death by reason of his absence in Borsippa. This explains also why Daniel was promised the honor of being "the third ruler in the kingdom." And this is but one of many instances in which attack upon Revelation leads to examination which only settles more securely its everlasting foundations.

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